

**INTERMEDIATE PHASE TEACHERS' VIEWS AND EXPERIENCES IN TEACHING  
LEARNERS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES IN READING AT ONE MAINSTREAM  
SCHOOL IN GAUTENG**

by

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the degree of

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## DECLARATION

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INTERMEDIATE PHASE TEACHERS' VIEWS AND EXPERIENCES IN TEACHING  
LEARNERS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES IN READING AT ONE MAINSTREAM  
SCHOOL IN GAUTENG

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I declare that the above dissertation is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at Unisa for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.

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SIGNATURE

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DATE

## **DEDICATION**

To all the teachers in mainstream schools who try their best to provide support to learners with learning disabilities in reading and for learners with learning barriers in reading for trying to cope in a mainstream educational environment.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Firstly, I want to dedicate this study to God, who gave me the opportunity to complete this study and for granting me the ability, skills and knowledge that went into this dissertation.

I wish to thank the University of South Africa for the opportunity to study for a Master's degree in Inclusive Education.

I am very thankful and grateful to the school that participated in this research study as well as the participants who contributed their time to be part of the data collection process.

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## ABSTRACT

Supporting learners with learning disabilities in reading in a mainstream school was the focus for this research study. This study explored the views and experiences of intermediate phase teachers at one private mainstream school with regard to the teaching of learners with learning disabilities in reading.

Although this research study focused on learning disabilities in reading, this study was guided by the inclusive education philosophy as well as the socio-cultural theory of Vygotsky, as the theoretical framework. The study's research methodology was guided by an interpretivist paradigm using a qualitative approach. The research design that guided the research processes of the study was the case study. Data was collected using a purposive sample of Intermediate Phase teachers and their Phase Head at one private mainstream school. The sample consisted of 9 participants. The data was collected in the form of a semi-structured individual interview and focus group interviews as well as document analysis. Thematic analysis was used to identify themes in the collected data.

The study's findings focused on: (i) understanding what the term learning disabilities in reading meant, (ii) how the planning and delivery of lessons included learners with a disability in reading, (iii) policy assertions as well as the views and experiences of teachers about teaching learners with learning disabilities in reading, (iv) how support for teachers could be enhanced in teaching learners with a disability in reading. The study's main findings indicate that participants had inadequate pedagogical knowledge to effectively teach learners with LDR, the planning of lessons did not include provisions for learners with barriers to learning, curriculum delivery and assessment practices needed to be improved in line with inclusive education principles and the identified gaps in policy versus practice needed to be addressed.

**Key terms:** Dyslexia, Inclusive Education, Intermediate Phase teachers, Learning Barriers, Learning Disability in Reading (LDR), Mainstreaming, Reading, Scaffolding, Universal Design for Learning, Zone of Proximal Development

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

ADD	Attention Deficit Disorder
ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
APA	American Psychiatric Association
CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DoE	Department of Education
EWP6	Education White Paper 6
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IDA	International Dyslexia Association
IE	Inclusive Education
IEB	Independent Examinations Board
LSEN	Learners with Special Education Needs
LTS	Learner Support Team
MPO	More knowledgeable others
PIRLS	The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
SBST	School Based Support Team
SIAS	Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support

SMT	School Management Team
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UDL	Universal Design for Learning
WP 6	White Paper 6
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

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# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW**

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

Reading is a very important skill that needs to be taught to primary school learners, so that they can continue reading throughout their school years and eventually at university and the workplace. Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning (2015:9) stipulates that “reading is generally understood to be the extraction of meaning from written words.” Therefore, if learners do not understand the words that they are reading, it makes it difficult for them to excel in their schoolwork and it can impact on their workplace when they are adults.

Research has shown that at least 80% of learning disabilities are allocated to learning disabilities in reading (Hargreaves, Rowbotham & Phillips 2009:7). According to this statistic reading seems to play a tremendous role in any form of learning and in most cases reading disabilities can be linked to other forms of learning disabilities, such as having difficulties with writing or mathematics.

According to studies done by McLaughlin, Weber and Barretto (2004:317-320) reading influences all aspects of learning in school. This means that learners with a learning disability in reading may struggle with all the subjects, because one needs to be able to read and understand in order to learn and understand the content of the learning materials. Once learners reach the Intermediate phase, reading difficulties become more evident, because they pronounce words incorrectly, read slowly, avoid reading, and struggle with comprehension, because they do not understand the meaning of the words and sentences and they lose their place easily when reading (Vogel 2011:117). Therefore, it is important to identify learning disabilities in reading in the Foundation phase or early in the Intermediate phase, so that these learning barriers can be identified, and support given to the learners, before they reach the senior phase in high school.

The South African Department of Basic Education has implemented the Education White Paper 6 (DoE 2001) to support the implementation of inclusive education in

South Africa. According to the Education department, the Education White Paper 6 (EWP 6) is there to guide the different ways in which the education system should be adapted to accommodate all the learning needs of learners in the classroom. (DoE 2001:11). Inclusive education is a supported curriculum method that is “flexible” and “accessible” so that any form of learning support can take place in the classroom environment. (Wilkens 1997:4). Inclusive education accepts “a diversity of learners” and there are support systems in place so that the learning needs of learners can be met, while it allows learners to learn from each other in the classroom (Wilkens 1997:4). It is important that teachers identify those learners in the classroom with learning disabilities in reading, so that an individual programme can be set in place to accommodate the learner in the classroom (Wilkens 1997:4).

EWP 6 differentiates between mainstreaming and inclusion: a mainstream school is where learners are forced to fit into a system, while inclusion focuses on identifying the differences amongst learners and accommodating their different needs (DoE 2001:17). Unfortunately, mainstream schools do not always make provision for learners who experience learning difficulties in reading. Mainstream school teachers do not always like to take responsibility for the learner with a learning difficulty in reading and therefore the teacher relies on remedial teachers or speech therapists to help these learners (Meijer 2005:10). An inclusive education approach guides the teachers to take responsibility for the learners with learning disabilities such as disabilities in reading, because the teachers must work together with the remedial teachers and other teachers to assist these learners in the classroom.

This study allowed me to investigate how teachers viewed and experienced learners with learning disabilities in reading as well as which methods the teachers employed to provide support to learners with learning disabilities in reading.

## **1.2 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY**

About 5% - 15% of learners are likely to have a reading disorder, with different estimations according to the specific diagnostic criteria used (Petretto & Masala

2017:1). This statistic reflects that in a classroom there is the likelihood that a percentage of learners' experience reading disabilities, which influence their academic achievements. Similarly, McGuyer (2012) explains that according to research done on learning disabilities in reading, there are many primary school learners who cannot read fluently.

For this reason, it was necessary to conduct a study that focused on teachers' views and experiences in teaching learners with reading disabilities. This study allowed the researcher to 'enter' the world of a teacher to discover what the teachers' experiences are within the classroom when teaching learners with a disability in reading.

The study also investigated how the mainstream school classroom teacher accommodates each learner in the classroom and whether inclusive education is evident in the classroom environment.

### **1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

This study focused on how teachers accommodate learners with a learning disability in reading in a private mainstream school and how teachers experience and view teaching learners with a learning disability in reading. According to Meijer (2005:10) teachers in mainstream schools, experience difficulties when teaching learners with learning disabilities. Teachers might not have the knowledge or skills to teach learners with these diverse needs, such as a learning disability in reading. It was important to find out how teachers deal with learners with learning disabilities in reading and what their views as teachers are, with regard to this research topic.

According to The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), an international comparative reading assessment done in 2016, showed that in South Africa more than half of the learners in every province did not reach "the international benchmarks ranging from 55% in the Western Cape to 91% in Limpopo, meaning that effectively, about nine out of 10 children in Limpopo could not read at the rudimentary

level.” (PIRLS 2017:107). Furthermore, the PIRLS stated that in 2016, 78% of Grade 4 learners in South Africa could not read for meaning.

This statistic is concerning and may be exacerbated by the presence of learners with a disability in reading in South African classrooms. In the South African context, hardly any research has been done on reading disabilities in reading at mainstream schools. Therefore, the researcher realised that there is a need to understand how teachers felt about teaching learners with learning difficulties in reading and if these teachers felt adequately equipped to accommodate these learners in a private mainstream school classroom. Since there is a paucity of research on this topic, this study would hopefully contribute to the body of knowledge in this topic.

### **1.3.1 Research questions**

The research questions were:

- What do mainstream teachers understand about learning disabilities in reading?
- How do mainstream teachers cater for learners with disabilities in reading during the preparation and delivery of lessons in their classrooms?
- What are mainstream teachers’ views about teaching learners with learning disabilities in reading?
- How can mainstream teachers’ efforts in teaching learners with disabilities in reading be enhanced?

### **1.3.2 Aims and objectives**

#### *1.3.2.1 Research aim*

The aim of the study was to investigate the views and experiences of mainstream teachers in teaching learners with learning disabilities in reading at a mainstream school.

### *1.3.2.2 Objectives*

The objectives for this research were:

- To investigate what mainstream teachers understand by the term 'a learning disability in reading'.
- To investigate how mainstream teachers cater for learners with disabilities in reading during the preparation and delivery of lessons in their classrooms.
- To investigate the views of mainstream teachers about teaching learners with learning disabilities in reading.
- To investigate how mainstream teachers' efforts in teaching learners with disabilities in reading can be enhanced.

## **1.4 PRELIMINARY LITERATURE REVIEW**

The preliminary literature review focuses on certain aspects that are further discussed in Chapter 2. The current study focused on the views and experiences of teachers who teach learners with learning disabilities in reading. Learners with learning disabilities experience great frustration towards learning due to their learning disability (Bushell & Cripps 2012:13). Learners with a learning disability in reading find it difficult to express how they feel and think. It is difficult for these learners to find the words to verbalise their thoughts. Learners with learning difficulties may experience low self-esteem because they feel different from other learners. These learners may isolate themselves, because they feel unwelcome amongst peers and they may also show signs of behaviour outbursts, just to get the attention of their teachers or peers (Bushell & Cripps 2012:10).

### **1.4.1 Defining learning disabilities in reading**

A learning disability in reading is defined by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) as a specific learning disability in a specific academic ability

(American Psychiatric Association [APA] 2013:68). The DSM-5 states that a learning disability in reading is also known as dyslexia but that the term dyslexia is only to be used in the clinical field (APA 2013:67). This research study focused on learning disabilities in reading and therefore learning disabilities in reading are defined as a difficulty in reading characterised by: incorrect pronunciation of words or sounds, not reading fluently, struggling with rhyming words and connecting the rhyming sounds and thoughts, and ideas being presented in a disorganised way (Bailey 2015:1). Children who experience learning disabilities in reading struggle to break up words and sounds because they cannot decipher the words they read. Interpreting and processing problems affect reading comprehension activities because the learner struggles to understand what is being read (Hargreaves et al 2009:7).

#### **1.4.2 Causes of a learning disability in reading**

Causes of a learning disability in reading are due to genetic factors, which is usually genetically transferred within the family, from one generation to the next (Hargreaves et al 2009:6). Furthermore, learning disabilities in reading (LDR) are caused by a condition in the brain's nervous system which has an impact on the way a person spells and reads words (Amsberry, McLaughlin, Derby & Waco 2012:13). Refer to Chapter 2 for a more comprehensive discussion of the causes of LDR.

#### **1.4.3 Diagnosis of learning disabilities in reading**

It is very difficult to diagnose a learning disability in reading. The primary and secondary reading disabilities influence the diagnosis of a learning disability in reading. (Petretto & Masala 2017:2) The primary disabilities focus on the reading part where the learner reads slowly, struggles to pronounce the words correctly and it takes much effort for the learner to be able to read the passage. This means that the reader struggles to read out the words and struggles to read fluently. The secondary abilities refer to comprehending the words and sentences and to be able to understand the information that was read and to make connections to the passage from life

experiences. This explains why the reader struggles to understand the information that was read and also struggles to remember what was read (Petretto & Masala 2017:2).

#### **1.4.4 Effects of LDR on learning**

Shaywitz (2003:37) explains that learners with a learning disability in reading do not find it easy to progress from speaking words to reading the words. This is because learners with learning disabilities in reading find it difficult to decode sounds to words, because they hear the words and sounds differently. This causes many learners with learning disabilities in reading to also experience an Auditory Processing Disorder together with their learning disability in reading. An Auditory Processing Disorder is defined as the “inability to distinguish subtle differences in sound or hearing sounds at the wrong speed.” (Kemp, Smith & Segal 2017:6). The learner finds it difficult to understand the words and sounds which makes it difficult to read and write. Read more on this aspect in Chapter 2, section 2.2.

#### **1.4.5 Learning strategies to support learners with reading disabilities**

According to Chute (2017:47) it is important for educators to try and help learners as much as possible by means of intervention so that these learners can be accommodated throughout their school years. Supporting these learners with learning disabilities in reading provides these learners with confidence and contributes to the shaping of these learners’ academic performance. Thomson (2011:88) explains that learners with severe learning disabilities in reading must receive intensive learning support from the teacher, which includes that the learner must receive training in “phonological awareness”, “phonological decoding” (breaking up of sounds), support with “independent reading” and “practice of comprehension strategies” (Thomson 2011:82).

It is important that the schools accommodate learners with severe reading disabilities. Learners must receive concessions when they are identified as learners with severe reading disabilities in reading. Read more on this aspect in Chapter 2, section 2.7.

## **1.5. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION**

Eisenhart (1991:205) explains that a theoretical framework structures the information that focuses on the theory for the research study. This study was guided by a theoretical framework in which I focused on two theories: Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and Inclusive Education.

### **1.5.1 Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory**

Vygotsky identified the sociocultural theory which focuses on learning and finding solutions for their learning difficulties (Pathan, Memon, Memon, Khoso & Bux 2018:232). This theory is the foundation on which this research study is based. This study focuses on how intermediate phase teachers view and experience teaching learners with a learning disability in reading at a mainstream school. The relevance of this theory is that it guided the researcher to gain a deeper understanding into how teachers view and experience learners with a learning disability in reading, and how they planned and delivered lesson for learners with learning disabilities, including those with LDR. Vygotsky identified the Zone of Proximal development as a concept which explains that a learner is able to understand an activity if the teacher guides and supports that learner. The zone of proximal development refers to the area of development where a child needs structure and direction to allow this learner to complete activities on their own. This means that if the teacher works with the learner and guides the learner, this engagement will eventually direct the learner to be able to complete their work independently. Teacher and learner interaction are very important, because when the learner reaches the zone of proximal development, the learner has reached the developmental stage of learning and now relies on the teacher for extra support (Woolfolk 2014:59).



The zone of proximal development (ZPD) can be used to address the topic of learning disabilities in reading, because it emphasises that the learner reaches an area of development with the assistance of a more knowledgeable other (MKO) such as a teacher. When the learner has successfully developed competence in the area of development and can work independently, this means that the learner has passed through the ZPD; only to enter a new ZPD, where success depends on the quality of support received by the MKO.

### **1.5.2 Inclusive Education**

I also relied on inclusive education (IE) as part of this study's theoretical framework since the research site where the study was conducted purports to be functioning within an inclusive education paradigm. There are many disputes regarding the meaning of IE. To understand the concept, IE, one has to look at the opposite of inclusion, which is exclusion. IE aims to identify learners with learning barriers and to guarantee that they are included within the school system (Loreman 2017:1).

Slee (2018:8) explains that Inclusive Education aims to ensure that all children have the right to access and participate in the classroom at the school. This definition means that learners with and without disabilities must be included in the school setup and they must receive support within their school environment. Another definition by Dixon and Verenikina (2007:197) is that IE is a system that changes a school system so that learners with learning or physical disabilities can be included in a mainstream school. An IE school is a school that caters for the diverse needs of all learners.

Please see section 8 and 9 of Chapter 2 for a detailed explanation of the theoretical framework.

## **1.6. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN**

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2014:6) a research method is a procedure that needs to be followed to collect and analyse data, while a research design is a plan that is to describe the conditions in which data are collected.

### **1.6.1 Research paradigm**

The type of research paradigm that was used for this study was the interpretivist paradigm. Taylor and Medina (2013:4) explain how the interpretivist paradigm in a research study focuses on understanding a phenomenon. This type of paradigm allowed me as the researcher to be placed in the participants' situation.

This paradigm flourishes from understanding the world of the participants through what they experience (Taylor & Medina 2013:4). The interpretivist paradigm allowed me, as the researcher to discover how teachers view and experience teaching learners with a learning disability in reading by collecting data in the form of interviews and document analysis. A full discussion of this study's research paradigm is found in section 3.2 of Chapter 3.

### **1.6.2 Research approach**

A qualitative research methodology approach was used for this research study. A qualitative research approach directs the researcher into the views of participants' worlds by giving sense to the views of every participant. (McMillan & Schumacher 2014:344). According to Manson (2002:1) qualitative research is an exhilarating and imperative research approach. A qualitative approach allowed me to do an in-depth study to identify how the participants view and experience teaching learners with a learning disability in reading. A full discussion of this study's research approach is found in section 3.3 of Chapter 3.

### **1.6.3 Research design: Case study**

A case study is seen as an investigation that asks questions such as “how or why” to receive answers to the questions the researcher posits (Yin 2003:13). A research design is a plan for the researcher to answer the questions about the study so that it can be truthful (Kumar 2011:96). A case study research design was used in this study. This research design allowed me to do an in-depth study of participants’ views and experiences regarding the teaching of learners with a disability in reading. The data that were collected for this study was in the form of interviews and document analysis. Please see section 3.4 of Chapter 3.

### **1.6.4 Population and sampling**

The term population is described as “a group of individuals or events from which a sample is drawn and to which results can be generalised.” (McMillan & Schumacher 2014:5). The population for the research study under focus, was intermediate phase teachers who work at a private mainstream school where teaching learners with a learning disability in reading was experienced. The selected sample was from the afore-mentioned population group.

The sample size for this research study was eight intermediate phase subject teachers and one intermediate phase head teacher, a total of nine participants. The intermediate phase teachers (Gr 4 – 6) included: three English teachers, two Mathematics teachers, one Social Science and two Natural Science teachers. For a detailed description of the population and sampling, see Chapter 3, sections 3.5.2 and 3.5.3.

### **1.6.5 Instruments and data collection techniques**

Data collection is the collection of “detailed information” to understand a precise “phenomenon” (Creswell 2012:120). A wide variety of data collection techniques, such as documents and interviews are used in a case study (Yin 2003:13).

#### *1.6.5.1 Document analysis*

Creswell (2012:223) indicates that documents are sources that provide a researcher with valuable information so that the researcher can get more insight from the participants presented in the qualitative study. The researcher can collect public or personal documents. For the purposes of this study, the researcher collected public documents for the case study. The following documents were collected: Accommodations (Concession) Policy of the school, Learner Support Policy of the school, the CAPS document to evaluate learning support in each subject as well as randomly selected term plans of the subjects. These documents were collected in the subjects: English Home Language, Mathematics, Natural Science and Social Science.

#### *1.6.5.2 Interviews*

Semi-structured interviews are defined by Manson (2002:65) as an interaction method between the researcher and the participants. Semi-structured interviews were considered appropriate for this study to gather information to answer the research questions of the study.

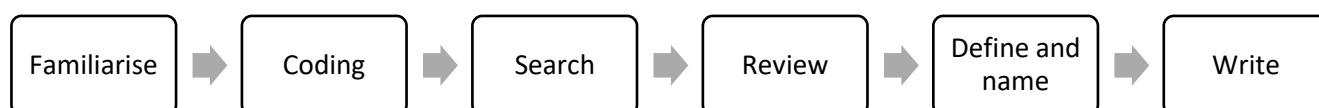
Please see section 3.3 of Chapter 3 for a detailed explanation on the data collection methods.

### **1.6.6 Data analysis and interpretations**

The data analysis and interpretation design for the qualitative research study was guided by the thematic analysis technique. A thematic analysis identifies themes in

the qualitative research study which is guided by the theoretical framework of the study (Clarke & Braun 2013:121).

Clarke and Braun (2013:122-123) identified six phases that the researcher can follow when doing thematic analysis:



Please see section 3.7 of Chapter 3 for a detailed explanation of the data analysis procedures used in this study.

## 1.7 CREDIBILITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS

Qualitative research has its own ways to ensure validity and reliability known as trustworthiness. Kumar (2011:171-172) explains that Lincoln and Guba identified four factors that help a researcher to ensure that the data are trustworthy. These four factors are known as “credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.”

**1.7.1 Credibility** as explained by Trochim and Donnelly (2007:149) is achieved when collected data is taken back to the participants to make sure that the collected information is a true reflection of what they had shared. Pandey and Patnaik (2014:5747) explain that credibility is something that analyses and tests the information by placing focus on what was presented and how it was supposed to be presented. It is very important to ensure that credibility is established. Credibility was determined by using primary documents and interview transcripts, that were used to discuss the collected information with the participants to establish that the information reflected the views they had shared accurately.

**1.7.2 Transferability** attempts to address the challenge of generalising the findings of qualitative studies to different contexts. Often, the results of a study only apply to

the particular research context under focus, which makes it difficult for a researcher to generalise the findings to similar contexts (Pandey & Patnaik 2014:5749). This makes it difficult for a researcher to make assumptions in different situations and for different groups of people. To establish transferability in the current study, I had to explain the process of information in an accurate and detailed manner for easy understanding of how the study unfolded from the beginning to the end by readers or other scholars who wanted to replicate the study.

**1.7.3 Dependability** allows the researcher the freedom to use the information that was gathered and to record the process, so that the results can be compared with the results that other researchers might find on the same type of data (Kumar 2011:172). Regarding the current study, a journal was kept ensuring dependability. Notes were made in the journal so that I could return to them and reflect on the information.

**1.7.4 Confirmability** is establishing that the collected data is in fact the correct data that were captured and analysed. Pandey and Patnaik (2014:5746) explain that the researcher uses confirmability in the study to ensure that the researcher always stays objective in relation to all the participants as well as to the results of the study. In the current study, a detailed record of all the research activities was kept establishing confirmability.

Please see section 3.8 of Chapter 3 for a detailed explanation of how trustworthiness was considered in this study.

## **1.8. RESEARCH ETHICS**

Research ethics is a crucial aspect in any research study because research ethics places the emphasis on honesty and truthfulness. This encourages researchers to act with integrity (Walliman 2011:42). The University of South Africa (UNISA 2016) has a policy on research ethics which was followed throughout the study to ensure that the research is conducted according to the ethical rules set out by the policy. Some of the ethical considerations are briefly discussed next.

### **1.8.1 Sequential description of permission that was sought in order to do research study**

Permission was obtained from the UNISA CEDU Research Ethics Committee to conduct the research study (Appendix A).

Permission was requested from the Executive Head of the school, to conduct the study at the specific school which became the research site (Appendix B).

Prior to data collection, the researcher approached potential participants and informed them in detail about the intended study. In this manner, informed consent was ensured before data collection commenced. During interviews, the researcher asked the interviewees for permission to record the interviews and the interviewees signed consent forms to give permission to the interviewer to conduct the interview and to allow the researcher to use the information that was gathered from the interview questions and also from the documents that were provided for analyses (Appendices C and D).

**The following important principles guided the researcher throughout this research study:**

- Non-maleficence
- Beneficence
- Autonomy or self-determination
- Informed consent
- Confidentiality and anonymity
- Voluntary withdrawal
- Storing of data
- Disposing of records
- Access to data
- Research outputs

Please see section 3.9.2 of Chapter 3 for a detailed explanation of these principles.

## **1.9 CHAPTER OUTLINE**

### **Chapter 1: Introduction and overview**

This chapter provided the background information to the research study.

### **Chapter 2: Literature review**

This chapter included all the literature that supported the research topic. This chapter focused on existing literature and theories that guided the researcher to *formulate* the basis of the research study.

### **Chapter 3: Research methodology**

This chapter included the methodology and design which determined how the researcher collected the data for the study in the form of interviews and documents.

### **Chapter 4: Presentation of results**

This chapter focused on the presentation of results by analysing the interview transcripts and analysis of documents.

### **Chapter 5: Discussions**

This chapter focused on the discussion of the results.

### **Chapter 6: Summary of Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations**

This chapter focused on providing the conclusion of the results as well as recommendations for further studies. The limitations of the study were also discussed.



## **1.10 CONCLUSION**

This chapter provided a background to the study, the rationale and purpose of the study and the research questions that had to be answered by the study. It also highlighted some aspects of related literature and introduced the theoretical framework that underpinned the study. An overview of the research methodology and ethical considerations was also presented. The next chapter presents the literature review and the theoretical framework.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this study was to explore how teachers experience teaching learners with learning disabilities in reading at one mainstream school in Gauteng. The review of literature aims to shed some light on the topic under focus, including how teachers accommodate learners with learning disabilities in reading within the classroom. The following will be discussed throughout this chapter: clarification of key concepts; what a learning disability in reading is, factors leading to a learning disability in reading; effects of learning disability in reading on the learners; and ways to accommodate teaching learners with a learning disability in reading. Lastly, the study's theoretical framework, namely Inclusive Education (DBE 2014a) and Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (Vygotsky 1978:86) is discussed.

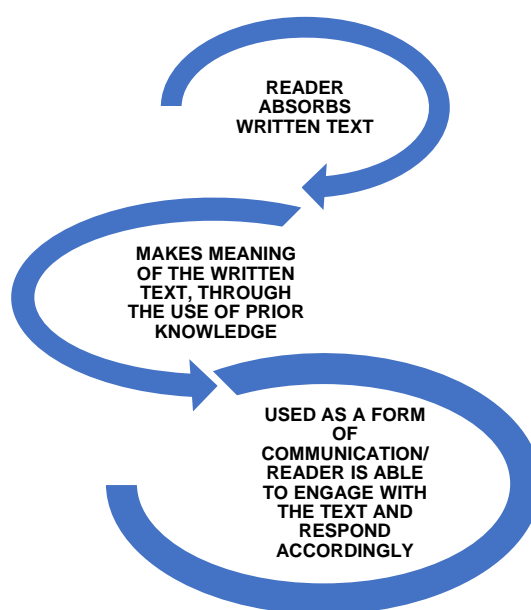
#### **2.2 CLARIFICATION OF KEY CONCEPTS**

##### **2.2.1 Definition of reading**

Researchers posit that reading takes place when the reader absorbs the written text and extracts the meaning from the text based on that knowledge in order to understand and make sense of the text (Frankel, Becker, Rowe & Pearson 2016:7-8). On the contrary, Bouwer and Dednam (2016:174) identify reading as a form of communication where people interact with each other. This interaction is based on their prior knowledge, which they use to systematically make sense of the information read to facilitate some sort of understanding. Both connotations of the concept of reading are correct and can be used interrelatedly. To understand the essence of the communication, the words need to be absorbed so that they can be fully understood. Once this process occurs, the reader is then able to either communicate, interact, or

engage with the text that was used for its intended purpose, for example understanding a story or question in a test or exam.

This process of understanding the definition of reading can be illustrated as follows:



**Figure 2.1 Definition of reading as a process**

### **2.2.2 How children learn to read**

Reading is not only the process from where the reader retrieves meaning from the written word, but rather through the interaction that takes place between the reader and the authors who present their views to their readers, who then extract meaning from the passage. Reading is seen as the decoding process where the reader decodes the meaning from the text by reading word for word (Yang, Tsai & Hikaru 2019:101, 103). Furthermore, reading is not an easy process where the reader just translates the word or makes combinations of the words to extract meaning, but rather a process in which the reader uses prior knowledge to receive the information as intended by the author (Yang et al 2019:111).

There are different approaches to learning to read such as the bottom-up approach, the top-down approach, and the interactive approach. These approaches illustrate the different ways in which learners learn to read. For learners to be able to read they must develop different skills such as phonological and phonemic skills as well as different reading levels that guide a learner to read. If the learner cannot read, he/she experiences certain challenges in learning. The different approaches to learning to read are discussed next.

#### *2.2.2.1 The bottom-up approach*

The bottom-up approach is explained by Vogel (2011:99) as an approach where the text is the starting point of learning to read. This approach emphasises that learners must read the words from the text as written which allows them to learn the word symbols and decode the words. This approach teaches the learner to learn phonics while they read, because they read word for word. This enables them to hear the different sounds as they read. Phonics refers to a method where the reading of words is taught through the sounds (for example: a in cat) of letters, grouping of letters (for example: ow in bow) and syllables (for example: ta-ble) (Nordquist 2018:1).

Reading exercises mainly focus on word recognition by learning sight words, analysing words and synthesis. Dambacher (2015:8) explains that the bottom-up approach determines reading in the processing of visual information. Therefore, visual aids are very important within the classroom when teaching learners to read.

This approach is supported by researchers Graf, Nagler and Jacobs (2005:205-218) who explain that word recognition is dependent on the visual processing of a word. When learners learn to read, it is important to develop phonological and phonemic skills. These skills must be taught in their early years of school when they first start to read. Schools must make sure that they have reading programmes in place that can develop learners' phonological and phonemic skills. Learners with a learning disability in reading must practise these skills repeatedly to help them towards fluent reading (Sutton & Shields 2016:16).

Learners must be taught sight words which helps them to improve their vocabulary and to recognise words when seeing them. Learners must understand that words are structured in a certain way. **Root words** are basic words that have affixes (prefix or a suffix to the word, for example 'be- 'in because/ '-ing' in sleeping), which change the meaning of the word. Learners who experience difficulty with **morphemes** ("segments of a grammatical word which represent choices from a set of options forming a grammatical category") (Harsa 2014:6) find it difficult to identify the root word because of too many syllables in the word. Morphemes comprising two separate classes such as roots and affixes (for example, read+ing) and syllables, help learners to break up the word when reading and to identify the different sounds when hearing them.

The advantage to the bottom-up approach is that it teaches learners to learn reading words correctly when they first begin to read. This enables the learner to understand the message the writer intends to transfer through the comprehension. The disadvantage is that learners tend to read word for word which may cause them to have a difficulty in comprehending the text (Vogel 2011:99).

#### *2.2.2.2 The top-down approach*

In Vogel (2011:99) the top-down approach is explained as an approach that is driven by comprehension. Here comprehension plays a very important role, because with comprehension it is important that the information be linked to the reader's prior knowledge. Learners must be able to read a text and comprehend what they have read. Dambacher (2015:10) agrees that the top-down approach plays a very important part in language comprehension, which means that learners understand words in context as it is intended in the comprehension instead of just retraining information from the word on its own. The top-down approach shifts the focus to the interpretation of the context which allows the reader to attach meaning to the text when reading.

The advantage to the top-down approach is that fluent reading is developed, and comprehension skills are developed more effectively. The disadvantage to this approach is that the learners do not have a framework which is the basic foundation

of learning sounds and reading of words, allowing them to check if they anticipated the unfamiliar or difficult words correctly from the text. These readers might not always understand the content of the text correctly (Vogel 2011:100).

#### *2.2.2.3 The Interactive approach*

The bottom-up and top-down approaches seem to have certain limitations. Therefore, the interactive approach (also known as the combined approach) was introduced. This approach focuses on taking word identification as well as comprehension together to enable teaching learners to read. This approach helps children who concentrate on letter-sound relations to gain an understanding of the content, whereas those learners who concentrate on comprehension can identify words simultaneously (Bouwer & Dednam 2016:177). Anyiendah, Odundo and Kibui (2019:272) describe the interactive approach as an approach that provides advantages to reading due to the combination of the top-down and bottom-up approaches. The interactive approach provides readers the opportunity to apply skills learnt from the other approaches together in one approach when reading. This allows a reader to interact with a text, make use of background knowledge to understand the text and simultaneously predict what will happen in the text and comprehend the information through summarising.

Regardless of the above approaches, learning to read is not always an easy thing for learners to do, especially if learners struggle with the basic skills needed to be able to read. Therefore, it is important for teachers and parents to identify barriers to reading as soon as possible for timeous interventions with learners with LDR, according to their needs. It is very important for learners to develop their reading skills, so that they can fulfil their everyday reading tasks.

#### *2.2.2.4 Reading levels*

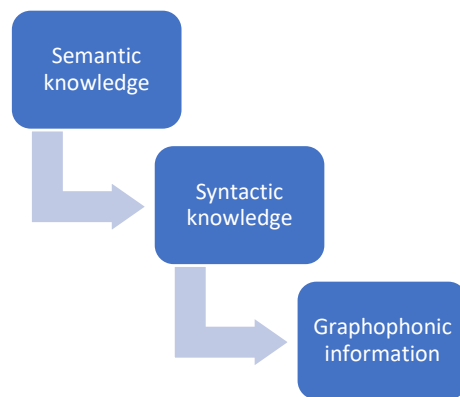
Reading takes place on different levels (see Figure 2.2), such as: (i) semantic knowledge, (ii) syntactic knowledge and (iii) graphophonic information. Fluent readers

make use of all three information systems to assist them when reading (Bouwer & Dednam 2016:174).

**Semantic knowledge** is where the child is able to extract meaning from the texts and associates this information with their pre-existing knowledge (Bouwer & Dednam 2016:174). Semantic knowledge refers to putting the words together so that they relate to each other. This is part of the meaning-making process. It is very important to master the meaning of words in order to make associations and understand words (Gärdenfors 2017:203). A typical example would be the words “apples and bananas” where the learner can associate them with fruit.

**Syntactic knowledge** refers to the way in which the reader processes the text. This allows the reader to keep track of the words and sentence that is being read (Bouwer & Dednam 2016:174) and how words are combined into sentences. By keeping track of the words, it allows for meaningful translation into understanding. This is important so that learners can read and understand what they are reading and make assumptions of what will come next. By looking at the following example, “Timothy goes to the....”, the learner can assume that the venue will follow such as the park, bank, or shop.

**Graphophone information** refers to how the letters relate to the spoken language, and the decoding process of words. This is easily evident when the pre- and suffixes get added to a stem word, for example, “uncover” (un- is the prefix and cover is the stem word and “walked” (-ed is the suffix in walked and walk is the stem word) (Sayeski, Earle, Davis & Calamari 2019:242). Figure 2.2 illustrates the process in which learning to read takes place.



**Figure 2.2 How children learn to read**

#### *2.2.2.5 Basic reading skills that need to be developed*

Children may find reading challenging if they experience difficulties regarding the following aspects when learning to read: (i) phonemic awareness, (ii) letter-sound relations, (iii) decoding, (iv) basic sight word recognition, (v) structural word analysis, (vi) contextual clues, (vii) vocabulary development, (viii) comprehension, (ix) dictionary skills (Bouwer & Dednam 2016:178-179). Learners must develop these skills to help them when learning to read. When a learner experiences challenges in grasping these skills, these challenges, as mentioned above, manifest immediately. These skills should be developed so that learners can read.

**(i) Phonemic awareness** refers to the sound of a word. Learners must be able to identify the sound of a word that is being heard and then manipulate it so that it can be a spoken word. Learners must be able to differentiate between the different sounds (e.g., fin and thin) and to identify a vowel in a word (e.g., bin). Phonemic awareness also refers to the whole word that is composed of different sounds (e.g., s-t-o-r-y).

**(ii) Letter-sound relations** refer to the relationship that the alphabet letters have with the sound that is heard when the letter is spoken. A learner who experiences challenges related to letter-and sound relations, may find it difficult to distinguish the visual letters from each other (Bouwer & Dednam 2016:178).



(iii) **Decoding** is defined as “the ability to translate a word from print to speech” according to Sayeski et al (2019:242) which means that the decoding process takes place the moment the learner sees the written word. Decoding happens when the learner is able to translate written letters or words into sounds. If the learner cannot decode information, they are likely to experience difficulties when learning to read.

(iv) Another important skill that a learner must develop when learning to read is basic **sight word recognition**. Sight words are high frequency words that develop decoding and word recognition skills for learners (Bouwer & Dednam 2016:175-176). Sight words enable a reader to recognise words once they see them in the written text. When a learner cannot recognise the previously taught sight words, it causes reason for concern (Bouwer & Dednam 2016:178).

(v) Bouwer and Dednam (2016:178-179) describe **structural word analysis** as the ability to identify the pre- and suffixes in a word. Identifying pre- and suffixes is a valuable tool to speed up the recognition of words. Learners experience challenges when they find it difficult to merge two different words to form one word. As a result, these learners also struggle to identify rhyming words and syllables.

(vi) **Contextual clues** refer to the hints that provide a reader with more information to the text. If the learner experiences challenges in utilising the semantic and contextual information from the written text, the learner might start concentrating on sounding out the words. Once this happens the learner is unable to identify the contextual clues when reading and cannot read with understanding. When the learner sounds out the words in a text, it hinders the learner in following the text that is being read (Bouwer & Dednam 2016:179).

(vii) A learner must have developed a **vocabulary** which allows the learner to identify words and understand the meaning of words. Insufficient vocabulary development gives rise to challenges such as difficulties with fluent communication and problems with comprehension because the learner does not have the vocabulary to comprehend the information (Bouwer & Dednam 2016:179).

**(viii) Comprehension skills** refer to understanding the text that was read and correctly answering questions based on the text. Inadequate comprehension skills may lead to the learner not being able to use the text to answer questions about it (Bouwer & Dednam 2016:179).

**(ix) Dictionary skills** must be developed at a young age. Dictionary skills help a child to learn the alphabet and to search for words in an alphabetical manner. Once it becomes evident that a learner does not know their alphabet, the use of dictionaries becomes a challenge, thus further limiting the learning of new words and their meanings (Bouwer & Dednam 2016:179).

The above challenges are the first signs of a learning disability in reading.

## **2.3 WHAT IS A LEARNING DISABILITY IN READING?**

There is no universally accepted definition of the concept of learning disabilities in reading. However, two internationally recognised organisations, the APA (2013:12) and the World Health Organization (WHO 2016:1) have expressed definitions of the term **learning disability in reading**, which was previously known as the term, dyslexia. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, fifth edition states:

“Dyslexia is an alternative term used to refer to a pattern of learning difficulties characterized by problems with accurate or fluent word recognition, poor decoding, and poor spelling abilities. If dyslexia is used to specify this particular pattern of difficulties, it is important also to specify any additional difficulties that are present, such as difficulties with reading comprehension or math reasoning.” (APA 2013:67).

According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, fifth edition (APA 2013:67) a specific learning disorder is used as an “umbrella” term that specifies different categories, such as an impairment in reading which influences reading, spelling, writing and phonological processing. Whereas the ICD-10 (International

Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems, 10<sup>th</sup> edition) that was developed by the WHO uses a classification system that describes a learning disability in reading as a “specific and significant impairment in the development of reading skills, which is not solely accounted for by mental age, visual acuity problems, or inadequate schooling” (WHO 2016:334).

Furthermore, the International Dyslexia Association (IDA 2017:3) formally defines a learning disability in reading as “a specific learning disorder that is neurological in origin.” Ultimately dyslexia can be understood as a complex disorder that comprises of and includes an amalgamation of abilities and difficulties that impacts on the learning process in any or all academic areas (Blackburn 2018:12-13). Blackburn (2018:12) further argues that a learning disability in reading affects the way a child is able to read, write and spell.

The term dyslexia date back to 1887 by William Berlin. He originally used the term to describe patients who experienced difficulties in reading due to a cerebral disease (Adlof & Hogan 2018:763). Adlof and Hogan (2018:762) describe dyslexia as difficulties in reading of words, decoding of words as well as the lack of accuracy of the spelling of words.

A learning disability in reading (LDR) can be defined as a language-based learning impairment. Learners with LDR experience difficulties with their language skills. These skills include reading, writing, spelling and pronunciation of words (APA 2013:66). A learning disability in reading is categorised as a learning impairment because a learner with a learning disability in reading finds it difficult to succeed academically in the mainstream environment (Olivier 2017:18).

The DSM-5 explains the diagnostic criteria for a Specific Learning Disorder related to a learning disability in reading (APA 2013:66).

1. Inaccurate or slow and effortful word reading
2. Difficulty understanding the meaning of what is read
3. Difficulties with written expression

A learning disability in reading also influences the progress in reading and this is shown where the child's reading ability is lower than the expected reading level, given the chronological age of a child when compared to a peer that does not display a learning disability in reading (Blackburn 2018:12).

## **2.4 FACTORS LEADING TO A LEARNING DISABILITY IN READING**

This section will focus on the factors leading to a learning disability in reading. A learning disability in reading is neurological in origin (Landerl & Banfi 2016:303). A learning disability in reading can also be inherited genetically. These factors will be discussed throughout this section.

### **2.4.1 Neurological origins of learning disabilities in reading**

It has been found that a learning disability already exists from birth and that the signs of a learning disability in reading will manifest throughout an individual's lifetime. In some instances, signs of a learning disability in reading will be more dominant during the school years with regard to reading, and later can become less prominent. However, difficulties with spelling will last a lifetime. A learning disability in reading cannot just disappear, but with hard work and adequate instruction it can be managed (Nijakowska 2016:46-47).

The DSM-5 describes a specific learning disorder as “a neurodevelopmental disorder with a biological origin” (APA 2013:68). This means that it is the foundation of anomalies at a cognitive level which relates to the behavioural aspects of the disorder (APA 2013:68). Therefore, a learning disability in reading is neurological in origin because the process of learning to read takes place within the brain (Landerl & Banfi 2016:303). Psychiatrists worldwide use the diagnostic classification as explained by the APA (2013:66) to identify reading disabilities in reading. This classification explains a learning disability in reading as inaccurate or slow and effortful word reading, difficulty understanding the meaning of what is read and difficulties with written

expression. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual or DSM, 5th edition thus implies that dyslexia can be legitimately viewed as a mental health issue” (Protopapas & Parrila 2018:4).

Research has shown that it is vital for teachers to understand the concept of neurobiology which can greatly benefit their understanding of how the brain works. This is extremely useful to teachers who teach learners with a learning disability in reading (Kearns, Hancock, Hoeft, Pugh & Frast 2018:176). Kearns et al (2018:176-177) further explain that researchers have theoretically determined that the data gathered from brain scans can assist teachers or parents with intervention strategies to help a learner who has a reading disability. These strategies include remedial intervention or seeking educational psychologist help. Intervention strategies are explored further in this chapter.

By understanding how the brain works, teachers are able to get insight into the minds of learners with learning disabilities in reading. Learners with a learning disability in reading use “different (neural) regions” and “different (neural) pathways when reading” than those learners without a learning disability in reading (Kearns et al 2018:181).

According to Adubasim & Nganji (2017:3) the IDA states that a learning disability is a neurological disorder. This means that there is a distinct difference in the structure of the brain in learners with a learning disability in reading to those learners who does not have a learning disability in reading (Adubasim & Nganji 2017:2). Adubasim & Nganji (2017:3) refer to the IDA and state that a learning disability in reading affects a person throughout life, because a learning disability in reading influences the person’s language skills such as reading, spelling and writing. Consequently, learners with LDR, experience academic difficulties and should be accommodated for special education or receive additional support. Learners may experience a severe difficulty when learning to read if they cannot analyse the phonemes (“a sound of a given language”) that allow a person to recognise the meaning of words (Zwicky 1982:55) and morphemes (“segments of a grammatical word which represent choices from a set of options forming a grammatical category”) (Harsa 2014:6) in a word.

It has been found that “areas of symmetry and asymmetry of normal brains differ when compared to those of individuals with reading disabilities. The autopsied brains of individuals with a learning disability in reading show variations in the outline of cerebral asymmetry of the language area with size differences, and minor developmental malformations, which affect the cerebral cortex” (Leisman & Melillo 2004:8).

Similarly, Amsberry et al (2012:13) explain that learning disabilities in reading are caused by a condition in the brain’s nervous system which impacts the way in which an individual reads and spell words. Ebere (2016:3) argues that the neurobiology of a learning disability has been studied for many years. The function and structure of the brain of a person with a learning disability in reading shows cerebral anomalies.

It is not easy for learners with a learning disability in reading to make the shift from speaking the words to reading the words (Shaywitz 2003:37). The reason is because learners with learning disabilities in reading cannot map out the sound to form a word, because they process the words and sounds differently. In many cases learners with learning disabilities in reading will also have an Auditory Processing Disorder. Kemp et al (2017:6) define an Auditory Processing Disorder as the “inability to distinguish subtle differences in sound or hearing sounds at the wrong speed.” This makes it difficult for the learner to understand the words and therefore makes it difficult for the learner to read and write. Cheng (2009:1) explains that a person with an Auditory Processing Disorder can hear but struggles to understand what is being heard. An Auditory Processing Disorder is therefore a difficulty with the processing of information that was heard. According to the MRC Institute of Hearing (2004:1) about 10% of children display signs of Auditory Processing Disorder, which is also associated with other learning disabilities. Children with an Auditory Processing Disorder can also experience difficulties in reading, which refers to a learning disability in reading (MRC Institute of Hearing 2004:3). This means that there is a link between an Auditory Processing Disorder and a learning disability in reading.

According to Allor (2002:48) phonological awareness is defined as a skill that supports the development of our language through understanding the sound system. Phonological awareness is seen as an oral language skill that focuses on the

connection between symbols and sound. It is important that learners develop phonological awareness because phonological awareness supports the learning to read process. Without phonological awareness, a learner struggles to connect sounds with the symbols for word-building to take place. Phonological awareness plays a very important role in the development of reading.

#### **2.4.2 Genetic inheritance**

Studies conducted by Swagerman, Van Bergen, Dolan, De Geus, Koenis, Hulshoff, Hilleke and Boomsma (2017:3) show that learning disabilities in reading are transferred genetically from parents to their children. Swagerman et al (2017:3) explain that parents with learning disabilities in reading transfer their negative genes to their children, however researchers believe that the environment also plays a role in the manifestation of learning disabilities in reading.

Thompson, Hulme, Nash, Gooch, Hayiou-Thomas and Snowling (2015:976) emphasise that a learning disability in reading runs within certain families, there is therefore a genetic link to LDR. A learning disability in reading usually manifests in families and there is a strong likelihood that the disability could be transferred to a child in the family. Amsberry et al (2012:13) further explains that learning disabilities in reading are due to a condition in the brain's nervous system which impacts the way an individual will read and spell words. Swagerman et al (2017:3) explains that gene-environment manifests in children with learning disabilities in reading because parents transfer their genes to their children and parents also provide their children with an environment to live in.

### **2.5 EFFECTS OF LEARNING DISABILITY IN READING ON THE LEARNER**

The following impacts that a learning disability in reading has on a learner will be discussed: (i) academic implications, (ii) avoiding certain school subjects, (iii) poor self-confidence, (iv) frustration towards learning, (v) low self-image, (vi) stress and anxiety.

### **2.5.1 Academic implications**

The DSM-5 explains a specific learning disorder with reading as an impairment influences the learners' learning skills. This, in turn, has an impact on their academic progress (APA 2013:68). It is important to diagnose learners with a learning disability in reading as soon as possible, so that they can receive help and assistance from teachers and parents. If these learners are just left to cope on their own, they "become victims of learned helplessness" (Woolfolk 2014:139). Learned helplessness implies that these learners feel powerless in the classroom environment and that no matter how hard they work, it will still have a negative outcome (Dednam & Du Plessis 2016:461). Nuvvula (2016:426) agrees with Dednam and Du Plessis (2016:461) that learned helplessness is a state where a person gives up because they feel like a failure. Nothing they do is good enough. Learners with LDR do not understand how to help themselves and therefore they cannot cope in the academic sphere.

Tunmer and Greaney (2010:229-246) further argue that learners with LDR have limited reading experiences and these influence their comprehension skills negatively. These learners try to figure out a way to cope with their learning disability and use ways to learn which are not completely effective. They avoid difficult subjects, and they have a fear of learning (Woolfolk 2014:139). Ebere (2016:5) argues that in a learning disability in reading, about 60% of cases influence the numeracy skills of a person. This impacts the calculation of numbers, writing of numbers, remembering how to make calculations and remembering timetables.

### **2.5.2 Poor self-confidence**

Reading difficulties are not limited to only negatively impacting academic progress. Willcutt and Pennington (2000:1039-1048) explain that learners with LDR display signs of poor self-confidence. Olivier (2017:30) further explains that learners are sometimes labelled as having a learning disability. This label may negatively affect these learners because it does not describe the difficulties that the learners



experience. These learners have poor self-confidence as a result of the labelling by others such as teachers.

### **2.5.3 Frustration towards learning**

Bushell and Cripps (2012:13) identify with Willcutt and Pennington (2000:1039-1048) that learners with learning disabilities experience much frustration when learning. It is difficult for a learner with a learning disability to express how they feel and what they think, because it is difficult for them to find the words with which to phrase their thoughts.

Spelling can be a challenge to these learners, and therefore teachers are encouraged to limit the number of spelling tests that they write. Teachers must also avoid asking these learners to read out aloud in front of the whole class. These learners may feel nervous, because they know that they struggle to read. Teachers should rather allow learners with LDR to read out aloud when there are no other learners in the classroom (Abadiano 2001:45). Assisting learners with learning disabilities in reading within the classroom, gives the learners confidence to read and spell.

The IDA (2017:5) stresses that learners with learning disabilities in reading experience high levels of stress and anxiety when it comes to their disability. These learners do not have control over their situation, which worsens when they find themselves in social interactions. These learners also get anxious because they cannot keep up with the other learners in the classroom. These learners always have a fear of making mistakes in public.

Learners get frustrated when they experience difficulties in reading, and the older they get the more their frustration grows. Eventually they give up because they feel that they cannot help themselves when learning. (Woolfolk 2014:139). These learners experience high levels of stress and anxiety. These learners may experience panic when they are placed into situations in which they cannot cope. They have to work

extremely hard at educational level to try and succeed which can be very exhausting (Ebere 2016:5).

#### **2.5.4 Self-image**

Bushell and Cripps (2012:10) suggest that learners with learning difficulties may experience low self-esteem, because they feel different to other learners, and may isolate themselves because they do not feel welcome amongst peers. They may also have behaviour outbursts, just to get attention. Baker and Zigmond (1990:515-528) argue that learners with LDR have more negative views about themselves when they are integrated into classrooms where there are learners with no learning disabilities. Frederickson and Jacobs (2001:403) explain that learners with learning disabilities in reading are more aware of their learning problems when they attend mainstream classrooms. The IDA (2017:6) supports the literature that suggests that learners with LDR experience challenges with their self-image. These learners mostly feel that they are not clever enough or capable enough to do certain things. Consequently, they become discouraged about continuing with school as they experience many challenges. They may also develop an external locus of control and therefore attribute any success they experience to pure luck and when they fail, they feel that their environment controls them and that they are not clever enough (IDA 2017:6).

Learners with LDR experience many different emotions regarding their learning disability in reading. According to Tunmer and Greaney (2010:229-246) learners with LDR fall behind with schoolwork because they have low self-esteem. Learning within the classroom can already be challenging but learning within a classroom and having a learning disability in reading can be even more challenging and can impact a learner very negatively.

## **2.6 FACTORS INFLUENCING TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES OF TEACHING LEARNERS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES**

There are different factors that influence how teachers experience teaching learners with learning disabilities in reading. These factors are associated with the teachers' abilities and preparedness to include learners with different special needs to ensure that Inclusive Education is included within the classroom (Pit-ten Cate, Markova, Krishler & Krolak-Schwerdt 2018:50). A number of factors are discussed next.

### **2.6.1 Teacher knowledge and attitudes**

Teachers have a limited view on what a learning disability in reading is, which causes them to sometimes label children (Rudiyati, Pujaningsih & Mumpuniarti 2017:272-273). Meijer (2005:10) explains that it is difficult for teachers in mainstream schools to teach learners with learning disabilities in reading. The teacher might not have the knowledge to teach the learner in appropriate ways, which will accommodate the learner's needs in the classroom. Colvin and Sherman (2018:27) encourage mainstream schools to focus on learners with learning disabilities in reading, to ensure that they receive intervention in the classroom which will accommodate these learners in the learning environment. Learners with learning disabilities in reading usually attend mainstream schools and they are expected to cope. It is very important for teachers in mainstream schools to realise that there are learners in their classrooms who do experience difficulties with learning, and it is important for the teacher to identify these learners who experience learning difficulties.

Pit-ten Cate et al (2018:50) argue that according to research, teacher competency and attitudes impact the way in which Inclusive Education is portrayed. Teacher competence refers to the skills and knowledge that equips a teacher to teach in an Inclusive Education set-up successfully. Pit-ten Cate et al (2018:51) further argue that teachers' competence does not only rely on skills and knowledge but also on the teachers' belief systems and motivation. Martin, Mihić and Matošević (2017:77) argue that the attitudes teachers have towards learners with a learning disability in reading

should be positive, because negative attitudes might influence learners' performance in a negative way. Teachers generally display a positive attitude towards learners with LDR, however the negativity comes when the teacher must teach these learners, because these teachers feel inadequately prepared to teach learners with LDR. Martin et al (2017:78) further state that research has shown that the attitudes of teachers towards Inclusive Education can be changed through educational and professional development which helps them to teach learners with LDR (Avramidis, Bayliss & Burden 2000:191-211).

There are two different types of attitudes: explicit attitudes (conscious attitudes) and implicit attitudes (without conscious awareness). Teachers' attitudes contribute much to the success of Inclusive Education. Teachers may express a positive or a negative attitude towards Inclusive Education (Pit-ten Cate et al 2018:53-54). The ability to teach learners with LDR depends on teachers' knowledge and skills. It has been found that teachers can be stereotypical when it comes to learners with LDR. Teachers might portray a negative attitude towards these learners which influences the way in which they treat and support learners with LDR (Martin et al 2017:77).

Teacher competence refers to their knowledge and skills that influence their success as teachers. Knowledge and skills are not the only things that entail teacher competence; but rather the way in which knowledge and skills are applied. (Pit-ten Cate et al 2018:51). Teachers who have experience in Inclusive Education show more competence than teachers without experience in Inclusive Education (Krischler & Pit-ten Cate 2019:2).

It is important that teachers acknowledge that there will always be children in their classrooms who experience barriers to learning and that they must be equipped to educate these learners. Teachers must know the curriculum and be able to adapt the content so that they can give assistance to learners with learning disabilities, including LDR. Learners with LDR must be included in the mainstream classroom and the necessary accommodations must be made in teaching these learners (Rudiyati et al 2017:247).

According to Dyson and Skidmore (2002:174-178) teachers who teach learners with LDR need to understand the level of reading disability the learner experiences so that the teacher can provide appropriate support. For teachers to be successful in teaching learners with LDR, it is important that they approach the learner with the right attitude and knowledge about the teaching methods needed to assist the learners (Gwernan-Jones & Budren 2010:66-86).

Teacher beliefs can impact learners in a positive way which motivates learner achievements. The beliefs of teachers play an important role in education because teachers' beliefs influence their way of teaching. Teachers with a strong belief that learners can perform despite their learning disabilities usually have better student achievement rates (Pit-ten Cate et al 2018:51).

Motivation is a crucial aspect of teaching. It has been shown that teacher efficiency and motivation promote positive teaching. This is very important within an Inclusive Education because it motivates learners to be more successful in their learning (Pit-ten Cate et al 2018:51).

### **2.6.2 Teacher resources and training**

Teachers' training should focus on special education. With training, teachers would be able to understand the concept of a learning disability in reading and the teachers would be able to support learners within the classroom. Teachers should be trained on the behavioural, cognitive and biological aspects of a learning disability in reading (S'lungile, Ugwuany, Okeke & Gama 2020:36).

It is important that teachers receive training to competently identify learners with LDR. Therefore, it is crucial that teachers must have an "in-depth knowledge" (Sutton & Shields 2016:16) of the basic language skills that learners need in order to be able to read. But there are many teachers who do not have the appropriate strategies or resources to support learners with learning disabilities. Sutton and Shields (2016:16) argue that it is important that schools provide teachers with resources and sufficient

training so that they can be equipped enough to support these learners. Some aspects pertaining to the proper preparation of teachers in supporting learners with learning disabilities are discussed next.

#### *2.6.2.1 Pre-service training*

Teachers must be trained to be effective teachers. Pre-service training refers to the training that student teachers undertake to qualify as teachers. Usually, these qualifications are offered at university and currently the most common teacher training qualification on offer is a Bachelor's degree in education for a period of four years. However, not all universities provide the same level of quality of teacher-training, which has an influence on the quality of teachers available to the schooling system (Balbay, Pamuk, Temir & Doğan 2018:48). It is important for teacher educators to keep abreast of the developments within the educational field (Balbay et al 2018:48-49) so that their students receive appropriate training. Goddard and Evans (2018:13) argue that pre-service training influences the teachers' attitudes and knowledge about Inclusive Education and how they practice IE in their classrooms when they enter the schooling system as qualified teachers.

#### *2.6.2.2 In-service training*

Balbay et al (2018:48) explain that in-service training during employment has even greater challenges because of the different pre-service training that the teachers received. These challenges refer to the fact that not every university offers the same quality of education or the same courses to prospective students. This is due to the "unbalanced economical, professional and social resources" that are available to the universities (Balbay et al 2018:48). Consequently, the teaching fraternity has diverse training needs which is very difficult to address because of the logistical and financial implications. It therefore becomes the responsibility of teachers to do more research to become more equipped so that they can meet the continuous challenges and demands of the education system. Teachers are not expected to diagnose a learning

disability in reading, but it is very important for teachers to have an accurate understanding of the concept (Knight 2018:209). With appropriate training, it is possible for teachers to identify learners who display difficulties related to a learning disability in reading so that interventions can take place (Knight 2018:210).

Olivier (2017:6) explains that qualified teachers do attend in-service training and not all of them have the knowledge, experience and skills to teach and provide support to learners within the classroom who experience barriers to learning, especially learners with LDR. Teachers however feel that although they are qualified and attend in-service training, they may lack the experience and confidence to provide effective support to learners with a learning disability in reading. Teachers feel that they do not have adequate training to enable them to implement Inclusive Education successfully and to provide appropriate support to learners with a learning disability in reading (Olivier 2017:48).

The type of in-service training that teachers need to enable them to implement Inclusive Education and provide support to learners with LDR should include training in the field of IE, training in addressing learning barriers within the classroom, and specific training in addressing LDR.

#### *2.6.2.3 Training and programmes for teachers*

According to the International Literacy Association (2016:2) it is important to acknowledge that approaches to reading interventions cannot be a one-size-fits-all approach. A specific approach must be used to teach learners with a learning disability in reading. The design and delivery of specific training programmes with regard to LDR is necessary to ensure that reading interventions are appropriately delivered (Gabriel 2018:265).

Teachers attend universities where they obtain degrees, however teachers should still follow courses that will help them to gain knowledge in teaching learners with a learning disability in reading. The International Literacy Association has a standard-

based course that focuses on the development of teachers through professional learning that is aimed at understanding the instruction of reading, research development and to enable teachers to make informed decisions (Gabriel 2018:266). Teachers should use multiple approaches when teaching learners with a learning disability in reading. Teachers must attend programmes that specifically focus on teaching reading to learners. Attending workshops that teach skills and provide knowledge to teachers will provide teachers with the opportunities to be able to implement intervention strategies (Gabriel 2018:266).

Specific programmes should be developed that can be used in practice to engage and support learners with a learning disability in reading. Teachers should be trained so that they can implement these programmes. Teachers must not miss the opportunity to use resources and to gain more knowledge on the topic (Gabriel 2018:268).

## **2.7. WAYS TO ACCOMMODATE TEACHING LEARNERS WITH A LEARNING DISABILITY IN READING**

There are different ways to accommodate learners with a learning disability in reading. These ways include: the classroom environment, the use of a learning support assistant teacher, layout of worksheets, marking of written tasks as well as different teaching approaches to support learners with a learning disability in reading.

### **2.7.1 Classroom environment**

According to Martin et al (2017:84), teachers feel that it is important to establish an environment for learners with learning disabilities in reading where there is a good relationship between the teacher and the learners. When the classroom environment has a positive atmosphere, learners do not fear making mistakes. The Martin et al (2017:84) study also reported that teachers felt that it was important to work as a team together with parents and a speech therapist to give learners with LDR the best possible support.



According to Sutton and Shields (2016:16) “The classroom is a microcosm of inter-related forces that impact learning including factors of homework expectations, resources used, student recording, physical environment, time constraints and stressors”. With this in mind it is important for teachers to be aware of how the classroom environment impacts the learners. Teachers must acknowledge that learners with a learning disability in reading might find it difficult to concentrate in class and find listening and viewing activities a challenge (Sutton & Shields 2016:17).

Learners have different needs that affect their learning, such as emotional, cognitive, social, emotional and physical needs (Olivier 2017:41). These needs affect the learners’ experience of the classroom environment. Learners spend most of their day in the classroom environment, therefore it is necessary for the teachers to create a positive and friendly environment for the learners (Olivier 2017:41-42). It is important for teachers to have classroom management in place to provide learning support to these learners within the classroom environment.

Ebere (2016:11) explains that teachers find it difficult to teach learners with a learning disability in reading. Teachers feel that they need to find accommodations to support these learners within the classroom environment and to make the classroom environment friendlier for these learners, whether at mainstream or at a special needs school.

Because learners with learning disabilities in reading attend mainstream schools, it can be challenging for the teachers to accommodate these learners within the classroom setup. Therefore, it would be a good idea for the mainstream teacher to receive assistance when teaching in a mainstream classroom to ensure Inclusive Education is practical.

### **2.7.2 Learning support assistant teacher**

It could work well to appoint learning support assistant teachers at mainstream schools to assist the teachers who teach learners with learning barriers, including those with

LDR. The learning support assistant's role would be to provide the teacher with support by working together with the School Based Support Team (Landsberg & Matthews 2016:101). The Department of Education Guidelines for full-service or inclusive schools explains tasks that an assistant teacher should undertake to be able to support the teacher (DBE 2010:23-24). These tasks include: assisting the teacher in identifying learners with learning barriers, assisting with the implementation of programmes to assist learners with learning barriers and providing support in assessing learners in collaboration with the therapists and class teachers (DBE 2010:23-24).

Such assistance should make the situation less stressful for teachers who teach learners with learning disabilities, including LDR, because the responsibility will be divided between the teacher and the assistant.

### **2.7.3 Layout of worksheets**

The manner in which teachers present lessons in the classroom is crucial to learners with LDR. Sutton and Shields (2016:16-18) suggest a few tools that teachers can employ in their classroom, such as appropriate classroom resources, the appropriate layout of worksheets, using of appropriate font and learning materials such as worksheets or PowerPoint presentations. These tools are discussed in the next paragraph.

Teachers must ensure that they have appropriate classroom resources when they teach learners with LDR. It is suggested that teachers keep the layout of worksheets familiar and consistent for the learners. Layout of worksheets can play a very important role when teaching learners with LDR. Font is a crucial part of the worksheet, because it can provide learner support when reading (Sutton & Shields 2016:16). These learners find it difficult to copy notes. Therefore, the teachers can assist these learners by providing them with the lesson notes in the form of written worksheets or Power Point presentations. Research has shown that a three- dimensional font on

worksheets has shown improvement of up to 25% in reading (Sutton & Shields 2016:16).

#### **2.7.4 Marking of learners' written tasks**

Olivier (2017:40-41) explains some strategies that teachers can use to accommodate learners with LDR in the classroom. These strategies include approaches to the marking of their schoolwork and assessments. With regard to the marking of books, teachers must realise that the manner in which they point out mistakes may have a negative impact on a learner. It might be a good idea to use a different colour pen when marking books instead of a red pen. The reason for avoiding a red pen is because red may be interpreted by the learners as a sign of failure to the learner. Teachers can also change the way in which they mark spelling errors, by only marking spelling that has been previously taught to the learners, posits Olivier (2017:40-41).

#### **2.7.5 Different teaching approaches**

There are different teaching approaches that teachers can use in order to help them teach learners with a learning disability in reading. These approaches include: (i) using multilevel teaching, (ii) using multi-sensory approaches to teaching, (iii) diagnostic assessments to ascertain the level and type of support required, (iv) the use of digital resources, (v) developing phonological awareness, (vi) developing comprehension skills, and (vii) implementing assessment accommodations (concessions). These approaches are discussed next.

##### **2.7.5.1 *Multi-level teaching***

Teachers can make use of a multi-level teaching process to accommodate learners' diverse educational needs. The method suggests that teachers present the class with the task. The teacher must then divide the learners into groups according to their levels

(Olivier 2017:34). Learners are grouped into different levels to ensure that different curriculum materials can be adapted for the specific level group. Each learner with a learning disability in reading processes information differently. It is therefore the teacher's responsibility to have different learning materials so that learners can have the opportunity to learn from the different learning materials that will be more beneficial to them (Olivier 2017:35).

#### *2.7.5.2 Multi-sensory approach*

The multi-sensory approach refers to the use of more than one sense when learning. In other words, multi-sensory learning uses all five senses, hearing, seeing, listening, speaking and feeling (Suryaratri, Prayitno & Wuryani 2019:101). The multi-sensory approach can be used to focus on the development of sounds (phonics), writing, structure of sentences (syntaxes), meaning and the relationship between words (morphology) (IDA 2017:4).

The multi-sensory approach includes visual learning aids, such as pictures, auditory aids, such as music or other sounds, tactile aids, such as feeling the texture of different objects and lastly kinaesthetic activities, which involves moving around (Johnston 2019:341). The multi-sensory approach can be used to develop spelling, reading and writing. Auditory and visual cues can be used to support learners when learning phonics (Nijakowska 2016:50). Johnston (2019:341) supports the concept of using the multi-sensory approach, because using different sensory skills activates the different parts of a learner's brain.

Multi-sensory structured learning methods include: phonological awareness training, visual aids, writing systems and morphology. When using the multi-sensory method, the teacher teaches the elements of the language. This involves sound, spelling, vocabulary and grammatical structures. Grammatical structures refer to listening, speaking, reading and writing skills (Nijakowska 2016:49). To boost learners' reading and spelling, teachers should include phonological awareness training with sound-symbol associations training when teaching learners with LDR. It is important to focus

on spelling, so that learners can group words into different families according to sound and spelling patterns.

Teachers should begin with bigger and salient phonological sounds and then move on to the smaller individual phonological sounds. Learners should be able to perceive words within sentences then identify syllables, onsets and rhymes within the words and then eventually identification of individual sounds. The development of sounds is known as phonological awareness. Teachers can use multisensory activities such as tapping the sounds with their fingers on the table or clapping the sounds out with their hands. Learners can also tap or count the sounds in syllables, word, or sentence. Learners can also look in a mirror when they make sounds so that they can see how their lips and mouth shape the sound (Johnston 2019:341).

The structure of a word refers to morphology. This includes base words, prefixes and suffixes. Learners with LDR find it difficult to build words. Activities such as memory games, writing games and rhyming songs can help learners with a learning disability in reading to build words. Although it is important that teachers provide more specialised training to learners with LDR, especially with regard to sound and spelling, it is also necessary to provide a supportive environment for these learners (Nijakowska 2016:51).

#### *2.7.5.3 Diagnostic assessments to ascertain the level of reading and type of support required*

It is very important that teachers provide interventions to learners with LDR. Assessment must be the very first step which a teacher must take to determine the level of support a learner needs after noticing that the learner experiences challenges in reading. Firstly, it is important to establish the reading level of the learner. This will guide the teacher in choosing appropriate reading material for learners with LDR (Bouwer & Dednam 2016:179).

Teachers must approach learners with learning disabilities in reading with sensitivity. Teachers must not view these learners as weak because of their disability. Teachers must work diagnostically with regard to teaching. It is important to look at the learner's assessments by identifying patterns of strength and weaknesses. Teachers must observe these learners to determine where they need assistance (Pavey 2007:71).

Literacy is a very important aspect in the primary school. Thus, it is important that teachers identify those learners with LDR as early as possible, so that teachers can provide support to those learners. Learners with LDR should be placed strategically in the classroom which allows them to participate with all the other learners. This includes placing learners in the front of the class where the teacher can assist them easily, placing learners in groups based on their academic levels or pairing learners (Pavey 2007:71).

#### *2.7.5.4 Digital resources*

Digital resources are a way of supporting learners with LDR with regard to their learning experiences. One of the ways to provide learners with support is by using assistive technology. The use of technology in the classroom can promote an ideal environment where the learners can have the opportunity to observe other learners and teachers who use the technology, so that they can learn how to use the technology. This allows the learner to interact with the other learners and the teacher through the use of technology (Blackburn 2018:6). Technology provides a method that can help learners with a learning disability in reading to accomplish academic tasks (Blackburn 2018:7). There are different types of assistive technology that can be used to support learners with LDR, such as different software applications on computers, tablets and smart phones.

Chester (2015:1) explains that assistive technology is beneficial to learners with LDR, although each learner may benefit differently from the different types of technologies. Fälvh and Svensson (2015:2) explain that assistive technology, such as the use of spell checkers and text-and-speech recognition software have been used to support

learners with LDR. The support that these technologies provide is to read the text to the learners or to type what the learners say to the computer.

Fälth and Svensson (2015:2) further explain that the use of tablets and smartphones are much more applicable to use in cases where learners have a learning disability in reading. The reason for this is that the use of technology can help the learner to listen to a voice when reading a text instead of reading alone. These tools also allow learners to immediately check spelling errors in their written work. In this way, the learners receive immediate support.

Fälth and Svensson (2015) investigated the potential of the use of one software application, Prizmo on iPhones or iPads for learners with a learning disability in reading. Prizmo is an optical character recognition multi-functional application that combines several functions, (Fälth & Svensson 2015:4). The functions that the Prizmo application presents include scanning text and synthesizing speech that provide support to learners with poor reading abilities and decoding skills. This application presents a speech function that reads out the highlighted words. This application therefore helps the learner with reading and developing decoding skills.

Another software application designed to support learners with a learning disability in reading is called “DyslexiConnection” (Andrews 2017:ii). The application website also lends more support to the teacher by making available learner support materials and training video’s (Andrews 2017:2). This website gives remedial support to learners with a learning disability in reading. The support provided is a software application that can be downloaded onto a smart device. This website organises different resources such as reading materials and writing activities. The learners can use these activities to practice their reading and writing skills. Activities such as practicing phonological awareness, syllables, sight words, grammar and sentence structure is aimed to help learners improve their reading and writing skills (Andrews 2017:5-6).

Sutton and Shields (2016:18) suggest the use of digital material such as ‘The Dragon Voice Recognition Aid’, that allows learners to transcribe their thoughts via the speech-to-text function. This bypasses the spelling and writing difficulties that the learner

experiences. The Natural Reader is another application that can also be used to access the written text and converts the written information to spoken words. This can be a great asset to learners with LDR because it removes the barrier of having to read for learners with LDR.

#### *2.7.5.5 Phonological awareness*

One of the best ways to assist learners with LDR is to give them phonological-awareness training. Uhry and Shepherd (1997:104-123) suggest that teachers must encourage learners to listen to the sounds in so that they are able to make a connection to the sound and be able to identify the letter of the sound in the word. Therefore, it would help learners to associate the sound with the letter.

The writing system includes spelling and sentence structures. Once a learner has grasped phonological awareness, it is important that they then learn how to use the alphabet. Learning the patterns of letters and understanding the sound that the letters present is a vital part of reading. Phonics instruction helps learners to read and to make connections with the sounds and spoken language. Learners with LDR find it difficult to spell, proofread and pronounce words, thus practising spelling and sounds should be emphasised. Learners should also practise their syntaxes which include the mechanics of language, sentence variations and grammar. Comprehension is a very important aspect in developing syntactic awareness. In order to develop syntaxes, learners should be able to understand grammar and apply the knowledge when reading or writing. Activities using word cards help learners to build words and sentences (Johnston 2019:341-342).

Teaching learners to develop strategies to help them to read and spell, is very important. Even though learners with LDR must be taught about phonological awareness, they may still struggle with phonological processing. It is therefore important for teachers to provide these learners with remedial education, when learners are given speech therapy by means of practising sounds and doing reading exercises. (Abadiano 2001:43).



#### 2.7.5.6 *Developing Comprehension skills*

The most difficult learning barrier faced by learners with LDR, seems to be comprehension. In the case of comprehension texts, the learners need to read, recognise and understand the content that is being read. When reading comprehension texts learners need to make connections to their prior knowledge and they must be able to add meaning to words. Teachers can help learners by reading the story together and explaining difficult words or phrases. Learners should then be encouraged to retell the story or to even draw the story to show their understanding in reading which will motivate the learners to provide support to each other (Vogel 2011:128-130).

#### 2.7.5.7 *Assessment Accommodations (Concessions)*

It is important that the schools accommodate learners with severe reading disabilities. Learners must receive concessions when they are identified as learners with severe learning disabilities in reading. The following accommodations may be effective in supporting a learner with LDR: adapting the questions of the question paper (by setting up the questions on the same level as the learner's reading level, which can be determined in the home language subject). This will make it easier for the learner to understand; giving the learner additional time to complete a test; getting someone to read the text to them or an audio recording of the text; allow the learner to complete an oral examination or use a scribe to write down the answers of the test (Le Roux 2016:28-29). These methods support learners with severe learning disabilities in reading.

I conducted my research at a private school for the research study and therefore I will discuss the school's policy on learner accommodations and concessions for learners with LDR. The school's policy (Research site 2019e:1) is in line with the *National Policy Pertaining to the Conduct, Administration and Management of the National Senior Certificate Examination* (DBE 2014a).

Learners with severe learning disabilities in reading are eligible to receive the following accommodations with regard to assessments: additional time, use of a digital player or recorder, computer, or voice to text, or text to voice programmes, oral examination, reader, rest breaks, scribe, separate assessment venue and spelling concessions (Research site 2019e:4-5).

A learner who receives extra time due to their learning disability can receive up to 20 minutes extra per hour to write the test. The learner can be provided with a digital player or recorder, the teachers will have to audio-record the test so that the learner can listen to the recording when writing the test. With regard to the use of a computer, the learner will be able to see the test on the screen and once the assessment commences, recording begins, this allows the learner to read the test and listen to the test at the same time. If a scribe is used during the assessment, the scribe writes down the answers of the learner which the learner provides orally. The scribe and the learner will also be placed in a separate venue. Assessment tasks of learners with learning disabilities should exclude the assessment of spelling competence when assessing the tasks and therefore a sticker must be placed on the front cover of the answer script to inform the marker that the spelling errors of the learner must be ignored. (Research site 2019e:5-6).

The Department of Education gazetted a document called *Guidelines for inclusive learning programmes* in 2005 (DoE 2005). This document strives to assist teachers and to guide them on how to apply Inclusive Education in the classroom. According to this document (DoE 2005:90) it is important that teachers understand that all learners within the classroom will differ from each other. Therefore, it is necessary to use diverse teaching methods within the classroom.

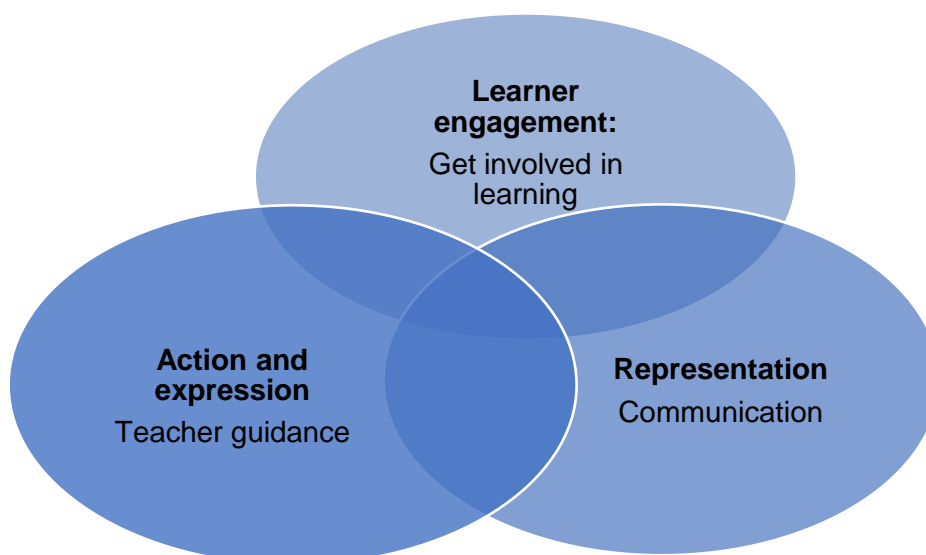
#### *2.7.5.8 Universal Design of Learning*

Universal Design for learning (UDL) was developed to provide teachers with strategies to improve learning and is a valuable teaching and learning tool in the Inclusive Education class (Loreman 2017:4). This method intends to provide learning to all learners so that everyone can be taught successfully. UDL is known as an educational

approach that provides guidance to the development of flexible learning environments and the accommodation of learning spaces for individual learning differences. UDL can be used in Inclusive Education classrooms to provide multiple ways of learning to all the learners in the mainstream classroom. Through this approach, learners with LDR can connect to a learning method that works best for them under the guidance of teachers. Teachers can nurture learning traits, effective communication, and provide learners with different options to complete their tasks through goal setting (Loreman 2017:7). Teachers must identify learners' different learning styles within the classroom from which learners benefit most. This is where the UDL principles come into practice.

UDL identifies three principles that can guide teachers when teaching in an Inclusive Education environment. UDL is structured so that it can be flexible and adaptable in any classroom set-up and circumstances. (Loreman 2017:4; Rose, Gravel & Gordan 2014:475-491). This UDL- model supports learners to build their character so that they can become strong and develop a positive self-concept (Loreman 2017:7). If the teacher uses these three principles as a method to ensure that Inclusive Education can succeed within the classroom, the teacher would be able to accommodate all learners with learning barriers.

The three principles of the UDL model are multiple means of: (1) learner engagement, (2) representation and (3) action and expression (Loreman 2017:18) as illustrated in Figure 2.3.



**Figure 2.3: Model of Inclusive Education - Universal Design for Learning principles**

*(i) The principle of engagement*

This principle focuses on the different ways in which learners can become involved in their learning experiences. Here the focus is shifted to the learners' interests, abilities and their learning styles which manifest in the classroom. To ensure that learners engage in the classroom they must be motivated by the teachers. Teachers must use the principle of engagement to give learners the opportunity for self-regulation and to encourage their expectations and their beliefs. If teachers provide learners with the opportunity to engage in their own learning, they ought to be able to get the learners more motivated (Loreman 2017:5).

With regard to learners with LDR, teachers can motivate them by encouraging them to participate in the reading activities and to assist them where they struggle. For example, teachers can read a text out aloud in the classroom and then allow the learners to read as a group. Thereafter the teacher can focus on individual reading. By then the learners with LDR would have heard the text twice before they have to read it on their own. The teacher can then guide the learner during individual reading.

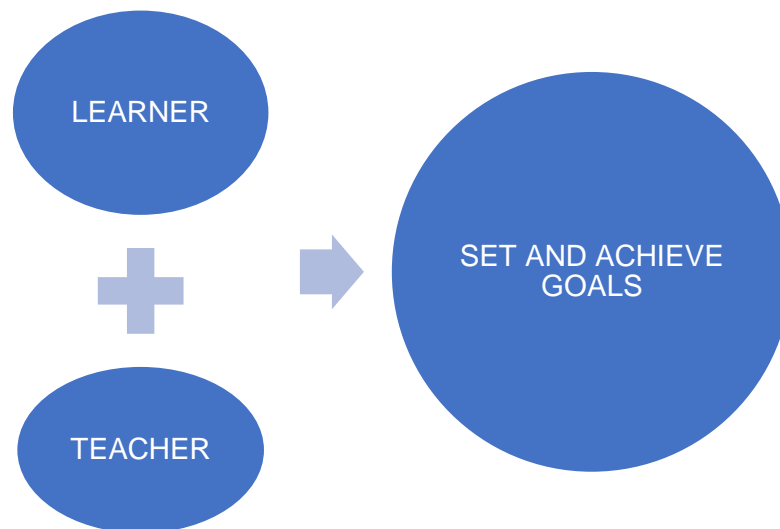
Teachers can also assist these learners by practising phonics and reading fluency with them to improve their vocabulary.

*(ii) The principle of representation*

This principle focuses on the communication between the teacher and the learners. The best forms of communication are being considered in this principle. In order for learners to communicate effectively, teachers need to provide them with comprehension options to help them to gain better knowledge so that they can communicate better. Learners must be assisted in the communication process so that they can understand the information by decoding the information by asking questions like: *where, what, why, who* and *how* to visualise the comprehension (Loreman 2017:5-6). For example, the teacher can practise comprehension skills by giving the learners reading passages and asking them questions about the text. This can be done verbally or in written format.

*(iii) The principle of action and expression*

This principle focuses on guiding learners to set goals (see Figure 2.4). Teachers must work together with learners to help them set goals, do planning and develop learning. Teachers must monitor the progress of the learners. There must be different methods of communication such as visual, verbal and written communication. For example, teachers can provide pictures to learners with LDR that illustrate the words or sounds when practising reading in class. Teachers can also practise sight words more regularly in class to help these learners improve their vocabulary. Another approach to improving communication skills is by practising listening and verbal skills (Loreman 2017:6-7).



**Figure 2.4: Principle of Inclusive Education-Goal setting**

## **2.8 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY**

The theoretical framework for this research study was guided by the Inclusive Education philosophy (IE) and the Socio-cultural theory of Vygotsky. Inclusive Education was chosen because the South African Basic education system is underpinned by this philosophy. IE speaks about how learners with learning barriers should be included in the education system and how to support learners in schools who experience barriers to learning (Swart & Pettipher 2016:3). In addition, IE refers to equal education and opportunities (Swart & Pettipher 2016:3). Vygotsky's theory complements Inclusive Education philosophy and will be discussed later in the chapter. The school that was selected for this research study is a private mainstream school which purportedly applies the policy of IE within the school.

### **2.8.1 Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory**

Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory "focuses on what learners learn and the solution to their learning problems" (Pathan et al 2018:232). This theory is the foundation that supports this research study which focuses on how intermediate phase teachers view

and experience teaching learners with a learning disability in reading at a mainstream school. This theory is relevant to this research study because the study wanted to gain a deeper understanding of how teachers experience learners with LDR. Vygotsky believed that “human activities take place in cultural settings, and they cannot be understood apart from these settings.” (Woolfolk 2014:55). The socio-cultural theory includes key concepts such as the zone of proximal development (ZPD) and scaffolding.

Vygotsky identified two levels in which development takes place: the “actual” level and the “potential” level (Gonulal & Loewen 2018:1). ZPD is defined as “the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky 1978:86).

The potential development of the child focuses on what the child can do “through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky 1978:86). The ZPD can be used to assist learners with LDR to learn through observational learning. Observational learning is necessary because it provides learners with the possibility to be able to move from being able to do work independently, to the point where they cannot work independently and need guidance and collaboration from the teacher or other learners. In other words, the learner gets instruction; not in what they can already do on their own, but in what they cannot do independently as yet. (Vaccari 2017:313).

Vygotsky identified the ZPD as the place where a learner is able to understand an activity if the teacher gives guidance and support to the learner. The ZPD is the area of development where a learner needs structure and guidance to enable the learner to complete activities independently (Woolfolk 2014:59). Teachers play the role of giving guidance to learners so that learners can gradually learn how to complete a task and eventually complete the task without the assistance of the teacher. This suggests that if the teacher works together with the learner and gives enough guidance, the learner will eventually be able to complete the work independently.

Vygotsky believed that learners' success in learning depends on the approach teachers use to assist learners when learning and the encouragement the teachers give learners to motivate their learning opportunities (Sarker 2019:31). It is very important for teachers to accommodate learners with their learning in the classroom. Teachers must guide these learners so that they can apply the skills that the teacher taught them. Once the learner can apply the skills they had learnt, the teacher can take a step back, but if the learner cannot apply the skills that were taught, the teacher must then still provide the learner with guidance.

The learner must be placed among more knowledgeable others (MKO) in a learning environment for more effective learning. MKOs could be teachers or more capable peers that provide guidance and support. Learners should be given the opportunity to solve problems under the guidance of a MKO. Such collaboration should assist and motivate learners to reach their potential (Pathan et al 2018:233).

Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory addresses reading disabilities, because schools, whether mainstream or special needs school have to cater for the diverse needs of learners. The socio-cultural theory of Vygotsky has a very powerful influence on the concept of Inclusive Education. (Dixon & Verenikina 2007:198). This is relevant to this research study because it shows that learners with LDR experience their learning in the socio-cultural world which influences the quality of their learning process. There is therefore the possibility that learners will be able to learn from others.

According to Woolfolk (2014:55) Vygotsky believed that the environment in which a learner operates, has a big influence on how they interact in their environment and that the learners' behaviour is linked to their environment. For the learner to be able to function in the ZPD, scaffolding is an approach that gives further assistance to the learner. Woolfolk (2014:62) explains that scaffolding is support that is given to learners during their learning and problem-solving processes. The type of support includes examples of learning tasks, teacher encouragement, breaking up of work into smaller chunks to help the learner to work independently. Learners with LDR can be supported in their reading by practising phonics, reading fluency, pronunciation and comprehension skills.



Scaffolding was created by teachers as an intervention strategy so that they can assist the learner in the ZPD to expand their knowledge (Gonulal & Loewen 2018:2). The concept of scaffolding plays a very important role in the socio-cultural theory. Scaffolding is where the teacher creates a situation that allows the learner to participate so that their skills and knowledge can be increased (Pathan et al 2018:233). The idea is for the teacher to support the learner and give them guidance which promotes independent learning (Pathan et al 2018:233). The teacher must provide the learner with tools that will help the learner to focus on the task that needs to be completed. The elements must be appropriate so that the learner will be able to successfully complete the task (Sarker 2019:40).

Nordlof (2014:56) describes that “scaffolding” as strategies that teachers use to assist and guide learners so that they can reach the limits presented by the ZPD. The concepts of scaffolding apply two techniques such as cognitive and motivational scaffolding. Cognitive scaffolding supports learners and allows them to identify and solve problems by themselves, while motivational scaffolding refers to building up the learners’ characters by using words of affirmation within a supportive learning environment. Scaffolding is therefore an appropriate tutoring technique that provides support to learners during the learning process (Nordlof 2014:58).

Scaffolding is also seen as the method that is used in a classroom where the teacher adapts their teaching methods to meet learners’ needs with guidance and support. This suggests that teachers must adapt their approach to learners with reading difficulties, so that these learners can get more support through scaffolding (Hasan & Ahmad 2018:1033).

Furthermore, Gonulal and Loewen (2018:3) explain that “scaffolding is one of several elements of effective instruction that can be applied in the context of language learning.” Within the English language, scaffolding can be applied in several ways. Teachers must give proper guidance that models exactly what is expected from the learner. Guiding the learners with proper vocabulary will also assist the learners when they complete activities. There are a few techniques that teachers can use when implementing scaffolding. They are: (i) modelling, ii) developing metacognition, (iii)

contextualisation, (iv) bridging, (v) re-presenting texts, (vi) schema building. Gonulal and Loewen (2018:3-4) describes these techniques as follows:

**Modelling:** Teachers must provide learners with examples of how to do tasks. This allows the learners to follow the examples so that they can know what is expected of them. Teachers must also provide concrete guidance to the learners. Teachers can also model the correct language and vocabulary patterns that the children need to fully complete a task (Gonulal & Loewen 2018:3).

**Developing metacognition:** Teachers should provide learners with guidance by modelling structures to help learners develop their autonomy and metacognition by motivating learners to think aloud and do self-assessment when doing tasks (Gonulal & Loewen 2018:4).

**Contextualisation:** Teachers can contextualise the language learning process by using verbal and nonverbal aids, as well as visual aids such as pictures and videos to contextualise the content (Gonulal & Loewen 2018:3).

**Bridging:** With bridging teachers must help learners to build skills that they can use to activate their prior knowledge which will enable them to make connections between their personal experiences and the subject content (Gonulal & Loewen 2018:3).

**Re-presenting texts:** Learners should be guided to take one genre of text, for example a poem and transform the text into another type of genre, for example a narrative (Gonulal & Loewen 2018:4). The benefit is, that it helps learners to discover different text types and enables them to write information in different forms.

**Schema building:** Teachers can support the learners when introducing new content by connecting the new content to existing information that the learner already knows (Gonulal and Loewen 2018:3). The benefit is that it helps to prepare the learner when completing a reading task. The teacher can prepare the learners for the reading task by using the scaffolding technique to identify the title of the reading passage or to

identify the illustrations. This helps the learner to take new information and to combine it with existing information so that the learner understands the task better.

Pathan et al (2018:232) further explains that Vygotsky focused on the social surroundings that connect the teacher and the learner. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge that Vygotsky focused on the “social, cultural and historical artefacts’ that contribute to the learner’s cognitive development and their performance. Teachers should make use of Vygotsky’s socio-cultural theory to provide them with support to teach learners with a learning disability in reading. Teachers must guide learners to reach their ZPDs as well as teaching through scaffolding techniques to provide inclusive support to learners with a learning disability in reading.

## **2.8.2 Inclusive education**

### *2.8.2.1 Introduction: Definitions*

According to Slee (2018:8), “Inclusive Education refers to securing and guaranteeing the right of all children to access, presence, participation and success in their local regular school.” This means that learners must be included in the school setup, and they must receive support within their environment. This involves the diversity of all learners within the classroom no matter their needs. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO 2003:13) Inclusive Education (IE) is defined as:

“Inclusion is seen as a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education. It involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision which covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children.” (UNESCO 2003:13).

Inclusive Education (IE) is seen as a policy that aims for all learners to achieve educational gains (Phasha 2010:163). Inclusive Education is also an approach to teaching that sets out to raise learners' achievement through including all those learners who are vulnerable to being excluded (Florian & Black-Hawkins cited in DBE et al 2019b:6).

IE is a concept that has been debated about because of different ideas about the concept. The best way to understand the concept of Inclusive Education is to look at its contrasting concept, which is exclusion. IE aims to identify learners with learning barriers and to include them within the school system (Loreman 2017:1).

IE was also adopted as part of the theoretical framework in this study since the school where the study was conducted, espouses to IE in providing learning support. IE is linked to this research study because the study focus, namely, learning disabilities in reading, is a barrier to learning. IE opens the doors to all learners, irrespective of their learning disability (Swart & Pettipher 2016:6).

The research site of the current study is at a private mainstream school. Although the school is a private school it follows the CAPS curriculum which is the National Curriculum of public schools in South Africa and is also guided by other DBE policies such as SIAS (DBE 2014b). Therefore, even though it is a private school, it still follows the South African National Department of Basic Education guidelines with regard to the implementation of the curriculum and providing learner support to learners with barriers to learning, including those with LDR.

#### *2.8.2.2 International overview of IE*

International initiatives made a huge contribution towards the movement to implement Inclusive Education in South Africa. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Phasha 2010:167) articulated and supported the movement towards IE in South Africa. Sayed, Subrahmanian, Soudien and Carrim (2007:17) indicate that the debate held by the Convention on the Rights of the Child was to assure that quality

education must be given to all children. Inclusion was viewed as a strategy to enhance the sense of belonging and a suitable community for learners.

Different international declarations had an impact on the basis of Inclusive Education in most of the countries. The international agreements and legislation are briefly mentioned next (Phasha 2010:166-167).

The Charter of the United Nations (1945) focused on the development of individuals; their well-being and to ensure that their social and educational needs are advanced. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948, Article 26) stated that education must be directed to develop the human personality and to provide human rights and freedom. The International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1996, Article 13) states that everyone has the right to education and that education must enable all people to participate in society, to promote understanding, tolerance and friendship between the different nations. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966, Article 26) emphasised that everyone must be equally treated and that they must not be discriminated based on their race, language and religion (Phasha 2010:166-167).

Furthermore, the Salamanca statement made recommendations for Inclusive Educational settings and stated that the “practice of mainstreaming of children with disabilities should be an integral part of national plans for achieving education for all.” This means that even when learners are placed in special schools their education may not be segregated by any means. It was important to ensure that quality education was given to all, including girls and women with disabilities (UNESCO 1994:17-18, item 19).

All of the above international agreements and legislation movements had an influence on Inclusive Education in South Africa.

### *2.8.2.3 Principles of Inclusive Education*

Everyone has the right to education and therefore principles were put in place to ensure that the movement of education for all would manifest. Principles of Inclusive Education as set out by UNESCO (2000:12) are discussed below.

These principles include: (i) Universal access to learning, (ii) A focus of equity, (iii) Emphasis on learning outcome, (iv) Broadening the means and the scope of basic education, (v) Enhancing the environment of learning and (vi) Strengthening partnerships (Phasha 2010:168-169).

(i) Universal access to learning is a principle that aims to address the idea that education must be provided to everyone within the society. This can only be possible if basic education is provided to everyone, no matter who they are. Education should be available to all genders and learners with disabilities should be given special attention too.

(ii) A concept of equity focusses on removing any educational disparities to ensure that education is provided to everyone.

(iii) Emphasis on learning outcomes aims to create educational opportunities alongside meaningful learning which includes the acquisition of relevant values, knowledge, reasoning and skills. With these opportunities in mind, it becomes possible to define the learning outcomes within learning programmes.

(iv) Broadening the means and the scope of basic education is an idea that all learning needs are diverse and that these needs should be broadened and redefined regularly. Education must evolve from the early stages of learning that should be offered through the different school structures. Teaching learners is not only the teacher's responsibility but also the responsibility of parents and support from the community.

(v) Enhancing the environment of learning is a principle that strives to establish that learning is possible in a conducive environment. With this in mind the community must

make sure that factors such as nutrition, health, emotional and physical care are taken care of so that these learning programmes can be implemented.

(vi) Strengthening partnerships highlights that all stakeholders should take the responsibility to work together to ensure that learning programmes benefit everyone. This means that education is not the sole responsibility of schools.

These principles help to ensure that the Inclusive Education system can be possible in South Africa to ensure that all learners are included within the education system. This links to this research study that focuses on the inclusion of learners with a learning disability in reading at a mainstream school.

#### *2.8.2.4 Inclusive Education in South Africa*

##### *(i) Exclusion in Education before 1994*

The term exclusion education is defined as the denial to learners to participate in any cultural, curriculum activities, resources and rewards within a school (DBE, Department of Higher Education and Training, British Council, University of South Africa & MIET Africa 2019a:9).

In 1948 the National Party came into power and brought forward the policy of apartheid. During the apartheid era (1948-1994) education was divided into separate groups. In South Africa as well as in other countries disabilities were categorised according to different impairments. There were separate schools for learners with hearing impairments, sight impairments, cerebral palsy, physical disabilities, and learners who have specific learning disabilities, such as a learning disability in reading (Weeks 2003:78). Prior to democracy, South African education was fragmented based on the policies of apartheid, which were replaced by a unitary education system after 1994 democratic elections (O'Donoghue & Roncevic 2020:21). "The struggles for Inclusive Education across colonial and Apartheid history have many examples of enlightened transitioning to more inclusive approaches to education but these seldom

developed on any scale until the advent of an inclusive political system in 1994.” (O’Donoghue & Roncevic 2020:21).

Before 1994, in the pre-democratic era, South Africa’s education system was characterised by segregation and discrimination towards learners with special needs or disabilities, which deprived them of opportunities to experience the same type of education as learners without special needs and disabilities. School attendance was made more difficult for learners with disabilities because of the segregation and discrimination that was directed at them. Muthukrishna and Schoeman (2000:315-335) contend that there were two systems of education provision, special education and normal educational provision. It was believed that learners with special needs could not be part of the mainstream school system.

#### *(ii) Inclusive Education after 1994 in South Africa*

It is important to acknowledge that schools cannot function on their own and that schools are influenced by different factors such as economics, social and political developments. Changes within society impact the changes within schools. In South Africa, IE was developed after 1994 as a result of a long struggle “to overcome the differentiating exclusions of colonial and Apartheid education from the 1800s.” (O’Donoghue & Roncevic 2020:20).

A series of educational policies (e.g., Education White Paper 6 [EWP6], DoE 2001) were developed to address segregation and discrimination by developing an education system that could provide education to all learners (Phasha 2010:165).

The United Nations Children’s Fund (1990) Convention on the Rights of the Child played a tremendous role in the adoption of Inclusive Education in South Africa. This convention, which was ratified by South Africa in 1990, states that nations must commit to ensure that all children must receive education without being discriminated against (Phasha 2010:167). This was part of the development to move South Africa



towards an Inclusive Education school system that would include all learners no matter their disabilities.

The need for inclusivity in mainstream schools is revolutionary for learners with learning disabilities. The reason for this is that learners with learning disabilities such as LDR, need much support from their teachers to cope in the mainstream school. IE provides the framework for access to appropriate support (Swart & Pettipher 2016:6).

A number of education policies were developed including EWP6 (DoE 2001) which provided a framework that IE would underpin our education system. According to the Education White Paper 6 (DoE 2001:18) teachers play the most important role in beginning a system of Inclusive Education. Teachers are therefore expected to improve their skills and knowledge, so that they can give support to all learners and their different needs. IE in the mainstream school expects teachers to teach in a multi-level classroom where lessons are prepared which include individuals and addresses the needs of all learners as well as adapting the curriculum in such a way that all learners can benefit from it (DoE 2001:18).

The Education White Paper 6 (EWP 6), (DoE 2001) provides information to schools and teachers about the meaning of IE and what is expected from schools to implement IE in the classroom. EWP 6 explains that changes must be made in the education department, so that all diverse learning needs of learners can be met by the education system in schools (DoE 2001:12). According to the EWP 6, (DoE 2001:12) inclusion is based on the idea that learning disabilities are due to the education system and not because of the learner. Terms such as “learners with special education needs” and “learners with mild to severe learning difficulties” are used to identify that learning disabilities reside within the learner and not within the educational system (DoE 2001:12). EWP6 identified the language and revised the terminology to “barriers to learning and development” instead of the international terms referring to “disability and impairment” (DoE 2001:12).

EWP 6 describes that learners with disabilities will receive special education in line with their disability needs. Learners with a “low-intensive support” will receive support

in ordinary schools, whereas learners with a “high-intensive support” will receive support in special schools (DoE 2001:15).

EWP 6 defines inclusive education and training as a system where there is an emphasis that every child can learn and that every child must be supported according to his/ her needs. Inclusive Education focuses on the education system that needs to be a support structure to all learners with learning needs. The IE system strives to change the attitudes of teachers and learners, as well as adapting the curriculum and environment in order to attend to all the diverse needs of learners. It is very important to empower learners, so that they can develop their own personal strengths and that they can participate fully as learners within the education system. Because there are learners who need more intensive educational support, IE provides different types of support levels to all teachers and learners, so that IE can be successfully implemented (DoE 2001:16). This facilitates the inclusion of learners with LDR in mainstream classrooms.

EWP 6 differentiates between the term mainstreaming and Inclusive Education (see Table 2.1). Mainstreaming refers to a system where learners must fit into a specific system where they will receive support from specialists outside of the school. Learners in a mainstream school are required to change so that they can fit into the structure of the school. On the other hand, inclusion recognises that all learners experience different needs in the education system. An Inclusive Education system gives support to learners as well as educators to ensure that all learning needs are met. Inclusion shifts the focus to adapting the curriculum and the classroom, so that effective teaching for diverse needs can take place (DoE 2001:17). By adapting the curriculum, learners with LDR have a better experience of learning. For example, (i) these learners can receive easier reading materials when reading, (ii) spelling should not be considered during assessments and (iii) readers can be provided when learners have written assessment tasks to complete.

It is important that teachers acknowledge that there will always be children in their classrooms that experience barriers to learning and teachers must be equipped to educate these learners. Teachers must know the curriculum and must know how to

adapt the content so that they can give assistance to learners with learning disabilities in reading. Learners with learning disabilities in reading must be included in the mainstream classroom and the necessary accommodations must be made to accommodate these learners with their learning experience.

**Table 2.1: Mainstreaming vs. Inclusive Education**

<b>Mainstream education</b>	<b>Inclusive Education</b>
Learners must fit into to the system.	Recognising the differences between learners and building on similarities.
Provide extra support to some learners so that they can fit into the normal classroom routine.	Providing support to learners, teachers and the school system to ensure that a full range of learning needs are met.
Learner will be assessed by specialists who will give intervention strategies and placement of learners' programmes.	Focus is on teaching and learning to ensure development of teaching strategies which will be beneficial to all learners.
Focus on changes that need to take place within the learners to ensure that they fit in.	Focuses on overcoming barriers to prevent the full range of learning needs.
Focus is on the learner to be fit into the classroom environment.	Focus is on the adaption and support systems that can be implemented in the classroom to support the learners.

The Department of Education published a document named “Guidelines for inclusive learning programmes” in 2005 (DoE 2005). This document strives to assist teachers and to guide them on how to apply Inclusive Education in the classroom. According to this document (DoE 2005:90) it is important that teachers understand that all learners

in the classroom differ from each other. Therefore, it is necessary to use diverse teaching methods within the classroom.

Another policy that supports the implementation of IE in South Africa, is the Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) (DBE 2014b). This policy strives to give support to learners who experience learning barriers within the context of the National Curriculum Statement (R-12). This policy is crucial in propagating IE in line with the EWP 6. The SIAS policy indicates which procedures teachers should follow to identify learners with special needs. This policy details the process of how to screen, identify, assess and support learners with special needs. The SIAS policy sets guidelines to support teachers within the educational system. The SIAS also provides guidelines on how concessions should take place to provide the necessary support to learners with learning barriers. Enhancement of support is needed to ensure that Inclusive Education is evident within schools (DBE 2014b:9-18).

The National Policy Pertaining to the Conduct, Administration and Management of the National Senior Certificate Examination (DBE 2014a) provides teachers with guidelines on how to assess learners with learning barriers and how to provide support in the form of concessions. The policy states that learners “who have special educational needs arising from a disability, learning difficulty, learning disability, or behaviour and/or psychosocial disorder which creates a barrier to the learner achieving his/her potential in the assessment” (DBE 2014a:76) must be accommodated. Together with the EWP 6, this policy provides the necessary approaches that teachers can implement when assessing learners with a learning disability in reading by providing scribes, readers, recorder and additional time to complete an assessment (Research site 2019e:5-6).

### *(iii) Interdependent practical components of IE*

There are three interdependent practical components of Inclusive Education that schools should embody when it comes to the community, diversity and collaborations.

These three components as described in Vogel (2011:3) are: a support network, collaborative consultations and cooperative learning.

A support network refers to teams and individuals providing support to each other. This refers to the school-based support teams, the educational support services, the education district office as well as the community. Collaborative consultations include all individuals with different abilities, working together to implement programmes to diverse groups of learners, schools and learning centres. Cooperative learning is a method that is used to organise the activities in a classroom environment into social and academic experiences. Cooperative learning helps all learners, no matter their ability, to function and reach their potential. Cooperative learning includes heterogeneous grouping and peer learning.

Teachers can use scaffolding techniques within the IE classroom environment. Teachers can do this by breaking up long lessons into smaller lessons which will provide more scaffolding support. Much scaffolded support is provided at first and gradually more independence is given to learners as they develop the knowledge and skills, and their self-confidence grows (DBE et al 2019a:39). This links to Vygotsky's Social-cultural theory that was explained above because scaffolding is one of the techniques Vygotsky refers to in his Social-cultural theory, that is used as a method to provide support to learners with LDR.

## **2.9. CONCLUSION**

The literature review in this chapter presented some insight into the views and experiences of teachers who teach learners with learning disabilities in reading at a private mainstream school. The literature described a learning disability in reading as well as the factors related to a learning disability in reading. The literature review also included how teachers' attitudes and teaching methods influence their teaching when teaching learners with learning disabilities in reading. Teachers must know the curriculum and must know how to adapt the content so that they can give assistance to learners with learning disabilities in reading. Learners with learning disabilities in

reading must be included in the mainstream classroom and the necessary accommodations must be made to accommodate these learners with their learning experience. This chapter also focused on Vygotsky's socio- cultural theory as well as Inclusive Education, which was the foundation of this research study.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents the research methodology used in conducting this study. The chapter discusses the different research methodology components, such as the research paradigm, research approach, research design, population and sampling, data collection methods, data analysis, trustworthiness and ethical considerations. A discussion of each of these research components ensues. The research paradigm that was selected was the interpretivist paradigm. This paradigm was also a guide to determine the research approach used in this study, namely the qualitative research approach. This approach is described by Flick (2018:604) as a method that aims to study “the subjective meaning or the social production of an issue, event or practice” in which the researcher collects data that is not standardised, and analysis is based on texts. I aimed to use a case study research design for the research study.

I selected participants by using population and sampling techniques and explained the research site as a private mainstream school located in a socio-economically advantaged community in Gauteng. Participants were selected from the research site. I used semi-structured interviews and document analysis to collect data from all the participants. The study data were analysed using thematic analysis as proposed by Clarke and Braun (2013:122-123).

To ensure that all the collected data was an accurate reflection of what participants shared, I ensured trustworthiness through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Permission had to be asked for conducting the study and therefore, I had to consider the ethical considerations and ask permission from participants through prior consent. The UNISA (2016) research policy on ethics was followed throughout the study. The study’s research paradigm will be discussed next.

## **3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM**

### **3.2.1 Overview of paradigm chosen for the study: Interpretivist paradigm**

A paradigm is described by Bryman, Bell, Hirschsohn, Dos Santos, Du Toit and Masenge (2014:19) as a structure that informs the researcher about what should be researched, how it should be researched and how to interpret the results of the data collection. According to Kivunja and Kuyini (2017:26) the term paradigm was first defined by the American philosopher, Thomas Kuhn. Kuhn defined the paradigm as a way in which the researcher thinks and views the world. The paradigm emphasises the different perspectives and beliefs a researcher has towards the research data.

A paradigm has two dimensions: philosophical and technical. Philosophical dimensions focus on the ideas of the world whereas the technical dimension guides researchers when conducting research. Four principles define research paradigms: epistemology (the value of knowledge and how people obtain knowledge); ontology (the nature of feeling and existence); logic (how arguments and verdicts are developed and what is accepted as interference) and axiology (fundamental values) (McGregor & Murnane 2010:421). Gunbayi and Sorm (2018:57) describe four types of research paradigms, namely the functionalist paradigm, interpretivist paradigm, humanistic paradigm and the radical structuralist paradigm.

The research paradigm guiding the current study was the interpretivist paradigm. Certain characteristics arise with the interpretivist paradigm such as: the social world of a participant cannot be merely understood from one individual only, there are multiple realities and constructed socially. The belief that the findings are created by the information received by the researcher. Another characteristic is making sure that the individual is understood and not the universal laws that supposedly control human phenomena. These characteristics guide the researcher when using the interpretivist paradigm when doing research. Kivunja and Kuyini (2017:33) as well as Taylor and Medina (2014:13) assert that the main aim of the interpretivist paradigm is to understand the world of experiences of people. This paradigm therefore argues that the reality and knowledge are subjective towards people's experiences and their own



understanding of their experiences. Thus, researchers can never be entirely separate from their own beliefs and values. This may influence the way in which data is collected, analysed and interpreted (Ryan 2018:48). This can be directly linked to a relativist construct of knowledge which describes knowledge of a single idea as having multiple interpretations (Pham 2018:3).

The interpretivist paradigm was selected for this study because I aimed to investigate how intermediate phase teachers viewed and experienced teaching learners with learning disabilities in reading. The ontology of the paradigm is mainly concerned with the phenomena by seeking an answer to a research question through the indication of the existing type of knowledge that could be found (Alharahsheh & Pius 2020:40). Therefore, the interpretivist paradigm was used as a guide to explore teachers' views and experiences about teaching learners with learning disabilities in reading, because the interpretivist paradigm allowed me to understand the world views of the participants (Gunbayi & Sorm 2018:63). The epistemology of the paradigm focusses on how the researcher aims to uncover the knowledge to reach reality. Epistemology is seen as an internal factor within the researcher because it is concerned about the manner in which the researcher distinguishes between right and wrong, and it focuses on how the researcher views the world around them (Alharahsheh & Pius 2020:40).

Therefore, a shared professional background of the participants allowed me to understand their personal experiences better and discover an understanding of their perceptions through their experiences.

### **3.2.2 Possible advantages and disadvantages in adopting the interpretivist paradigm**

Embedded within the interpretivist paradigm, there are certain advantages and possible disadvantages which will be explored. Ways in which the researcher can overcome these disadvantages will also be discussed. The first advantage of the interpretivist paradigm is that it allows the researcher a profound understanding of the participants in their social setting, because the researcher is guided by diverse views

when looking at the phenomena (Pham 2018:3-4). The researcher usually undertakes research in the natural setting of the participants to ensure more accurate information pertaining to the research problem, as more inside information is available in the participants' natural setting (Pham 2018:3-4). The researcher is able to conduct interactive interviews with the participants to investigate the feelings and perspectives of the participants when being interviewed (Pham 2018:3-4). Therefore, the researcher will be able to explore and interpret the participants' varying understandings on a certain topic and so get different points of view (Thanh & Thanh 2015:24-25).

The second advantage is that the interpretivist paradigm enables researchers to consider the different factors that would help to describe the given reality and the beliefs of participants by focusing on the behavioural aspects based on the participants' experiences (Alharahsheh & Pius 2020:42). This enables in-depth information from the participants' experiences on a particular topic.

The third advantage is that the interpretivist paradigm allows the researcher to focus on the whole experience instead of considering certain parts of it. This means that the researcher will be able to look at the study and include all the aspects with regard to what the participants experience throughout the research process (Alharahsheh & Pius 2020:42).

The fourth advantage is that the researcher influences the terms of interest, involvement as well as commitment based on the questions and problems that the researcher identifies during the development of the research study. This is related to the type of influence that the researcher holds, where further questions arising from the communication with the participants, can be addressed. The researcher's interest and commitment are continuously developed in this way. (Alharahsheh & Pius 2020:42).

A few potential disadvantages in adopting the interpretivist paradigm are discussed next.

The first disadvantage is that the researcher might generalise the findings and it might be difficult for the researcher to acquire a deeper understanding of the phenomena. To overcome this the researcher must view the phenomena in the complex format within the context of what the study aims to achieve, instead of just generalising the results with other findings, therefore it is important for the researcher to view the phenomena in the appropriate context. Here the researcher will depend on the literature review (and the theoretical framework of the study) that will guide the researcher to understand the findings in the way it was intended to be understood (Pham 2018:3-4).

The second disadvantage refers to validity of the collected data. Therefore, it is important to ensure validity when collecting data to ensure that the data is authentic. This was achieved in the current study through meticulous planning of the study under the guidance of the research supervisor. All possible measures were taken to ensure validity including the detailed recording of all the steps in the research process under regular supervision. An example of ensuring validity was to triangulate data using different data collection methods, namely: document analyses and interviews with participants to get information on the research topic and the interviews were transcribed after each interview took place (Pham 2018:3-4).

The third disadvantage is that interpretivist researchers tend to be more subjective than objective towards a research study, because these researchers tend to view and explore the world from the participants' points of view (Thanh & Thanh 2015:24). As a result, the research findings can be influenced by the participants' points of view, as well as the researcher's own interpretations of the data. Here it is important for the researcher to remain unbiased by ensuring that all ethical considerations are in place to support the researcher (Pham 2018:3-4). In the current study, objectivity was strived for by keeping a journal in which all thoughts and interpretations were written down to 'monitor' and mitigate the possibility of personal biases influencing the role of the researcher.

### **3.3 RESEARCH APPROACH**

#### **3.3.1 Overview of research approach adopted for the study: qualitative approach**

A research approach is an approach that guides the entire research study. There are three different approaches to research, namely the qualitative, quantitative and mixed-methods approaches. The quantitative approach focuses on how something occurs over a particular time as well as how something is distributed by collecting the data and analysing it by using numbers and statistics (Flick 2018:604). A qualitative research approach allows the researcher freedom and flexibility to make assumptions and to include their own ideas (Kumar 2011:7). The mixed-method approach is a combination of quantitative and qualitative research.

A qualitative research approach was used in this research study in conjunction with the principles of the interpretivist paradigm (Thanh & Thanh 2015:25–26). McMillan and Schumacher (2014:344) explain that a qualitative research approach guides the researcher into the views of participants about their worlds, giving meaning to the views of every individual. According to Creswell (2014:32) “qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” which means that the qualitative approach focuses on the person who is being studied.

A qualitative research approach was the most appropriate approach to use in the current study because a qualitative approach allowed me to do an in-depth study of the experiences and the views of teachers who had taught learners with a learning disability in reading (LDR). The purpose of the study was to describe the research problem, to explore it and to present findings, (McMillan & Schumacher 2014:348). By using the qualitative research approach, the literature supports the research questions so that the research topic could be adequately explored by listening to the participants and understanding how they felt about the topic (Creswell 2014:61).

With regard to this study, the qualitative approach gave guidance to explore how participants perceived and experienced the world wherein they teach and provided an opportunity to enter the world of the participants. I wanted to get an overall picture of how the participants experienced their environment and how teachers assisted learners with LDR so that the research questions could be answered (Manson 2002:1).

There are advantages and disadvantages when using the qualitative approach. I will briefly discuss a few of each. The first advantage stresses the importance of discovering the phenomena (McMillan & Schumacher 2014:17) by understanding the participants' feelings and experiences. This was affected by describing the views of participants in detail in order to interpret their information through their actions (Rahman 2017:104). The second advantage is that the data collection and analysis procedures can be explained thoroughly by writing a narrative on the findings after the data has been collected and analysed (Kumar 2011:92-93). This means that the researcher will be able to take the information gathered from the individual cases and discuss the different viewpoints and experiences from the participants (Rahman 2017:104). The third advantage is that multiple sources can be used to collect data, sources such as documents and interviews which provide detailed and rich information about the research problem. (Kumar 2011:92-93; McMillan & Schumacher 2014:17, 20). These sources could include observations and interviews to allow the researcher to interact directly with the participant in order to obtain detailed information from the participants. The fourth advantage is that qualitative research has a flexible structure which means that the researcher can construct and reconstruct the design, to enable detailed analysis of the information (Rahman 2017:104).

One possible disadvantage in using the qualitative research approach is that the qualitative research method can sometimes leave out potentially sensitive information, while focusing on the participants' experiences. (Rahman 2017:104). To address this possible disadvantage, the researcher has to spend much time initially in gaining the trust of participants through thorough explanation of the research project and how participants will be protected from harm.

The second disadvantage is that the research problem, methods and procedures might be non-specific (Kumar 2011:92-93), as the qualitative research has different types of approaches to collect data and analyse data. This means that the researcher can use different categories, measurements and construction to explore the phenomenon and to gather information. I ensured that the research methods and procedures were clearly specified and appropriate for answering the study's research questions.

The third disadvantage refers to the non-specificity of a research question which can influence the way in which the research problem is formulated. With this in mind, I ensured to formulate the research problem and research questions lucidly (Kumar 2011:92-93).

The fourth disadvantage is that the interpretation and analysis of the data might be difficult to do (Rahman 2017:104), therefore a specific analysis method must be selected to guide the researcher in data analysis. In the current study, the data was analysed using the thematic approach advocated by Braun and Clarke (2006:79).

The fifth disadvantage is that in qualitative research "smaller sample size raises the issue of generalizability to the whole population of the research" (Harry & Lipsky 2014:445-460; Thomson 2011:77-82). However, the aim of this study was not to form generalisations with regard to the findings but to hopefully provide a rich description of the context and participants' experiences, therefore the focus was on an emic perspective (Thomson 2011:77-82).

A qualitative research study addresses the research questions in a case study design. This study allowed me to discover how teachers view and experience teaching and assisting learners with LDR.

### **3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN: CASE STUDY**

#### **3.4.1 Overview of the chosen research design: case study**

The research design adopted for this study was the case study. It is difficult to define a case study (Gustafsson 2017:2). According to McMillan and Schumacher (2014:6) a research design is a plan that is followed to describe the conditions in which data is collected. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018:247) a case study is defined as a qualitative design where the researcher does an in-depth study of a process or about one or more individuals. A case study is usually time-bound. The researcher uses different methods to collect data over a period of time. Therefore, this research design gave me the opportunity to investigate a case over a period of time by gathering multiple sources of information to strengthen the case study.

A case study is not used to analyse cases, but a way to comprehensively view each case. Yin (2014:16) defines a case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the case) in depth and with-in its real-world context.” A case can be described as a phenomenon that occurs in reality and for which the researcher cannot control the environment or the situation (Yin 2018:2).

According to Baškarada (2014:1) the reason why researchers use the case study design, is that researchers can investigate the research problem to gain a deeper view which will help the researcher to understand and explain the research problem in detail. Baškarada (2014:4) explains that the aim of a case study is to generalise theories and not to generalise to the population. Case studies are well suited for experiential transformation of “tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge” (Baškarada 2014:4) so that more profound insight into the case may be gleaned.

The case study design allows the researcher to link the research findings with the research question by using the data collection steps and analysis. The design is known as the ‘blueprint’ of the study because it should mark the research question, identify what the case is, state a hypothesis and use criteria to interpret the findings (Baškarada 2014:5).

The case study research design was employed in conducting this study because it was directed by the interpretivist paradigm. Gunbayi and Sorm (2018:63) explain that the interpretivist paradigm guides the case study to answer questions such as “Why?”, “What?” and “How?”. Similarly, Yin (2018:2) asserts that a case study is an investigation that asks the questions of “how or why” to receive answers. The case study research design allowed an in-depth investigation of participants’ views with regard to how teachers view and experience teaching learners with LDR. These questions were answered through interviews and document analyses in the present study.

The units of analysis in the study under focus were the intermediate phase teachers at one school. The participants comprised the intermediate phase head and subject teachers. I collected data in participants’ natural settings; at the school where the participants were employed. This was in line with the views held by Welman, Kruger and Mitchell (2005:193) who emphasise that it is important to conduct the research in the natural settings of the participants.

The literature serves as a guide to define the unit of analysis in the case study (Yin 2018:29-30). This exploration seeks to discover how teachers view and experience teaching learners with LDR. The study also wanted to discover the way the teachers used the curriculum and how they adapted the curriculum to give learner support to learners with LDR.

#### **3.4.2 Possible advantages and disadvantages in the use of case study research design**

Some advantages and disadvantages could arise when a researcher uses case study as a research design. The first advantage is that case studies can garner detailed information about participants (Almeida 2017:379) because the researcher can view the text in comparison to the singularity by analysing the individual case in detail. Case studies focus on the individuality of the participant, where detailed information is gathered (Almeida 2017:379). This serves as an advantage where the researcher is



using the information without comparison. This allows the researcher to obtain relevant data which increases internal validity. This means that the information cannot be taken out of context, and this makes the study valuable (Krusenvik 2016:5). The second advantage is that the researcher can study individual cases in-depth so that a hypothesis can be re-structured, and information can be discovered that was not anticipated by the researcher at the beginning. By studying individual cases, future research can be structured by the researcher (Krusenvik 2016:5) which provides innovation and theoretical changes (Almeida 2017:379). The third advantage of the case study design is that it helps the researcher to avoid the circumstances that do not address the primary research questions by allowing the researcher to focus on the main research question that is supported by literature. (Yin 2003:21). The fourth advantage is that the case study deals with the “logical problem and not the logistical problem”, meaning that the researcher is presented with a research problem that needs to be solved instead of focusing on research plans that may not (Yin 2003:21). Therefore, the advantage when adopting a case study approach is that the research problem is the priority in data collection and not the logistics of research plans which may or may not provide sufficient information to answer the research question. According to Zainal (2007:4) the fifth advantage of a case study is a detailed qualitative account that will help researchers to explore and describe the real-life data in the natural environment of the participants.

With regard to disadvantages in using a case study research design, the first disadvantage is that the case study research method has been described as the less desirable method to use, because it sometimes happens that the researchers do not do a good job when doing the case study due to procedures that the researchers do not follow, or due to the researchers having biased views (Yin 2018:18). This disadvantage was mitigated in the current study because the study was conducted under the supervision of an experienced research supervisor. The second disadvantage is that it is difficult to generalise from a small number of case studies (Almeida 2017:379), However, the aim of the current study was not to generalise findings but to provide an in-depth analysis of the research problem within the context of the study parameters. Experiments are based on the theoretical generalisation of the information and not to the whole population (Yin 2018:20), therefore the researcher

must strive to develop theories instead of just generalising the possibilities (Yin 2018:21). The third disadvantage is that case study research is a timeous process, which leads to many different methods of data collection, which takes a long time to analyse all the information collected for the case (Yin 2009:15). The fourth disadvantage is that it might be difficult to identify the case that is significant for the research study and how to clarify what to include in the case study as well as what methodology approaches to use in the case study (Flick 2018:107).

In the current study, I addressed these disadvantages by ensuring that the methods used, were desirable for the case study, and that I was not biased in any way during the selection of eligible participants, by making use of selection criteria to select the participants. I also made sure to use time wisely and kept to the deadlines that were set up to ensure that the case study was completed in time.

### **3.5 POPULATION AND SAMPLING**

#### **3.5.1 Description of research site**

The research site was a private, combined English-medium mainstream school located in a socio-economically advantaged community in Gauteng. I decided to conduct the research study at one site and to immerse myself to get contextually rich data at this one site. This site was selected to gather information from the participants in establishing how these teachers support learners with LDR at a private mainstream school.

The school caters for learners from grade R up to grade 12. The school has different buildings to accommodate the primary and the high school learners separately. These three departments (Early Childhood Development Department, Primary School and High School) are under the leadership of the Executive Head (school principal).

The Intermediate phase has the following subjects: Languages (English Home Language, Afrikaans First Additional Language and isiZulu – the latter is only taught

in grade 1), Mathematics, Social Science, Natural Science and Life Skills. The school also have a Robotics centre where learners can learn about robotics from grade 1. The school follows the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), which is the national curriculum policy used in South African public education. The school follows the CAPS curriculum from grade R up to grade 12. The matriculants follow the CAPS curriculum, however, they only write the Independent Examinations Board (IEB) exams in their final year of school.

The school also provides learners with cultural and sporting activities. Teaching with technology is very important at the school. Teachers make use of technology when teaching learners by using overhead projectors when presenting lessons, such as PowerPoint presentations.

### **3.5.2 Study population**

The term population is defined by McMillan and Schumacher (2014:5) as “a group of individuals or events from which a sample is drawn and to which results can be generalised.” The population for this research study was intermediate phase teachers at a private mainstream school who experienced teaching learners with a learning disability in reading. The sample was selected from the population group.

### **3.5.3 Sampling type**

Purposive sampling was used for this research study, so that the participants could be identified who were best placed to share information that was appropriate in answering this study’s research questions. Etikan, Musa and Alkassim (2016:3) refer to purposive sampling as a sample technique that is deliberately used to choose participants due to qualities the participants possess, and which are needed for the research study. The researcher decides what needs to be researched and identifies participants who can provide the researcher with the necessary information for the study (Etikan et al 2016:3). Welman et al (2005:69) also claim that this sampling type guides researchers

to find participants due to their own knowledge, truthfulness and findings from previous studies.

Purposive sampling is used when the researcher has a specific 'criterion of selection' in mind, which means that only participants who meet the criteria for the study, are selected to participate (Alvi 2016:53). Participants for this study were identified and selected using the following criteria.

- The participants had to be intermediate phase teachers.
- The participants had to have experience in teaching learners in the intermediate Phase.
- The participants had to have experience teaching intermediate phase learners with learning disabilities in reading at the school under focus.
- The participants had to include a phase head as well as subject teachers.

The participants were allowed to communicate their thoughts and focus on how they experienced the 'phenomenon of interest' (Etikan et al 2016:3) which refers to the way teachers view, experience, and accommodate learners with learning disabilities in reading.

#### **3.5.4 Advantages and disadvantages when using purposive sampling**

There are possible advantages and disadvantages in using purposive sampling. The first advantage is that I was able to select participants using selection criteria that identified the participants who were best suited to answer the research questions. (Ames, Glenton & Lewin 2019:3).

The second advantage is that with purposive sampling different ways can be used to retrieve information. This supported me during the data collection stages when using document analysis and interviews as multiple sources to get rich data (Welman et al 2005:68). The third advantage is that purposive sampling provides "a wide range of

non-probability sampling techniques” (Sharma 2017:751). This guides the researcher to avoid generalising towards a population group (Bryman et al 2014:186). With this in mind, I chose participants in a strategic manner to ensure that a wide variety of participants would participate in the study. I selected participants that would be able to answer the research questions when gathering information from them (Bryman et al 2014:186).

There are two main disadvantages when using purposive sampling. The first disadvantage is that purposive sampling can be very biased because the researcher selects the participants based on the researcher’s own judgement. (Sharma 2017:751-752). In the current study, the selection criteria guided the selection of participants, therefore minimising bias from my side as the researcher.

The second disadvantage is researchers want to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomena by looking at the “complexity of the context” instead of generalising the findings in relation to other texts and people, because it may be difficult to verify the usefulness and the validity of the research outcomes (Pham 2018:4). However, the aim of the current study was not to generalise findings.

### **3.5.5 Sample size**

The sample size for this research study was 8 intermediate phase subject teachers and 1 Intermediate Phase Head teacher, a total of 9 participants. The Intermediate phase teachers (Gr 4 – 6) included: 3 (English teachers), 2 (Mathematics teachers), 1 Social Science and 2 (Natural Science teacher). The role of the Phase Head is to oversee the department that includes the learners and the teachers. The Phase Head forms part of the Learning Support Committee. The Learner Support Committee consists of the Phase Head of the Foundation phase, the Intermediate Phase Head as well as the Head of primary school. The Learning Support Committee is there so that the teachers can identify learners who may need extra learning support or other types of support, such as support for emotional or behavioural problems. The school

does not have learning support teachers on site to help assist learners with learning disabilities. Table 3.1 illustrates the profile of the participants.

**Table 3.1 Sample profile**

	English Teachers		Mathematics Teachers		Social Science Teachers		Natural Science Teacher	
	Teacher	Code identity	Teacher	Code identity	Teacher	Code identity	Teacher	Code identity
Grade 4	1	A	1	B			1	C
Grade 5	1	D						
Grade 6	1	E	1	F	1	G	1	H
Phase head oversees the grades (4 – 6) in the intermediate phase								
Phase head				1				
code identity				I				

### 3.6 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Creswell (2012:120) describes data collection as “detailed information” that has been gathered in order to understand a specific “phenomenon”. According to Yin (2003) case study designs use a wide variety of data collection techniques, such as document analysis and interviews. Next the data collection methods used in this study are discussed.

#### 3.6.1 Document analysis

Creswell (2012:223) describes documents as sources that provide a researcher with important information so that the researcher can get more insight from the participants

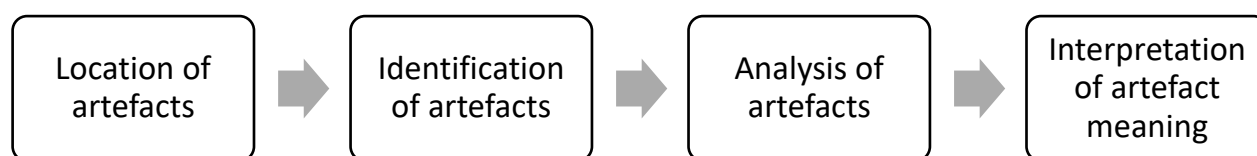
presented in the qualitative study. The researcher can collect public or personal documents. For the purposes of this study, the researcher collected public documents for the case study. The documents that were collected were the following: Accommodations (Concession) Policy of the school, Learner Support Policy of the school, the CAPS (DBE 2011a, 2011b, 2011c, 2011d) curriculum document to evaluate learning support in each subject, the CAPS (DBE 2011e) Guidelines for responding to learner diversity in the classroom as well as randomly selected subject term plans. These documents were collected in the subjects: English Home Language, Mathematics, Natural Science and Social Science. Table 3.2 lists the documents that were collected for analysis.

**Table 3.2 Collected Documents for analysis**

<b>Documents that were analysed</b>	
<b>School-based Policies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accommodations (Concession) Policy</li> <li>• Learner support policy</li> <li>• Subject term plans: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ English (Research site 2019a)</li> <li>○ Mathematics (Research site 2019b)</li> <li>○ Natural Science (Research site 2019c)</li> <li>○ Social science (Research site 2019d)</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>(Term plans were selected randomly)</p>
<b>Curriculum-based policies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CAPS document (DBE 2011a, 2011b, 2011c, 2011d) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ English (DBE 2011a)</li> <li>○ Mathematics (DBE 2011b)</li> <li>○ Natural Science (DBE 2011c)</li> <li>○ Social science (DBE 2011d)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• CAPS document (DBE 2011e): Guidelines for responding to learner diversity in the classroom</li> </ul>

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2014:387) there are three different types of documents for analysis: “personal documents, official documents, and objects.” According to Bowen (2009:27) document analysis refers to the revising of documents, which means that data must be studied and understood. I used a document analysis schedule (see Appendix H) that helped with the analysis of documents. The development of the items on the schedule was informed by the literature review and the theoretical framework of this study.

McMillan and Schumacher (2014:388) suggest strategies to collect data from documents for analysis. These are illustrated in Figure 3.1.



**Figure 3.1 Strategies in analysing documents (McMillan & Schumacher 2014:388)**

**Step one is** to identify the location of the artefacts as well as the participants from whom the documents must be obtained (McMillan & Schumacher 2014:388). In this study, I determined that the documents required were at the Private Combined school and the participants were the teachers and the Phase Head who had to provide me with certain documentation for analysis.

**Step two is** to identify the type of documents that needed to be collected as well as categorising the documents (McMillan & Schumacher 2014:388). The documents collected for analysis are listed in Table 3.2.

**Step three is** to analyse the documents, the researcher focusses on certain questions concerning the documents, such as (1) how were the documents used? (2) who used



the documents? (3) where were they used? and (4) what is the purpose of the documents? (McMillan & Schumacher 2014:388).

**Step four** was to interpret the documents and to connect the information with the interviews held with the participants. I made use of a document schedule to analyse the documents as well as interview transcripts.

### **3.6.2 Data collection using semi-structured focus group and individual Interviews**

#### *3.6.2.1 Individual semi-structured interviews*

Semi-structured interviews are the most used type of interviews when doing qualitative research (Alshenqeeti 2014:39). Semi-structured interviews depend on how the participants answer the interview questions. There are guided questions that allow the researcher to ask questions based on the research question, but it also allows the researcher to get more in-depth information from the participants as the interview unfolds (Adhabi & Anozia 2017:89). Flick (2018:226-227) explains that a semi-structured interview consists of three levels when asking questions: (1) open questions (asking the participant to express their views); (2) theory driven questions (using the theoretical framework and the literature of the topic to find out what the participants think) and (3) boundaries of professionalism (refers to the way in which the researcher conducts the interview regarding the manner in which the questions are phrased and the way the researcher acknowledges the responses).

Individual interviews were used to collect data from the Phase Head. The Phase head was interviewed to discover what support the school, including the Phase head provide to the teachers who teach learners with learning disabilities in reading.

The individual interview with the Phase Head was held first, so that I could get information from the Phase Head with regard to policies and support structures for teachers that the school has in place to support teachers when teaching learners with

learning disabilities in reading. This interview did not exceed two hours and the interview was recorded and transcribed. The participant had to sign a consent form prior to participating in the interview (see Appendix E).

Individual interviews consist of some advantages and disadvantages. I will briefly highlight a few of each. The first advantage is that the researcher is able to do an in-depth interview with the participant and go into a deeper level to retrieve information from the participant that highlights the issues that the participant experiences (Adhabi & Anozia 2017:89). The second advantage is that participants get the opportunity to explain their problems freely during interviews based on how comfortable they feel about the topic (Adhabi & Anozia 2017:91). The third advantage is that the researcher gets the opportunity to interact with the participants during the interview to ensure that the participants understand the research topic (Adhabi & Anozia 2017:91).

The first disadvantage is that the information that is retrieved from participants might be biased because it filters through the participants' involvement. (Creswell & Creswell 2018:188). To overcome this disadvantage, I firstly spent time placating any fears the participants might have had about confidentiality and anonymity with regard to their participation. The second disadvantage is that the interview can be time-consuming, therefore the researcher should set a time limit to the interview to keep to the time schedule. The third disadvantage is that interviews can present the potential for the researchers to be biased on a subconscious level. To ensure that the researcher is not biased. Smith and Noble (2014:100-101 suggest that the researcher can overcome bias by outlining potential origins of bias which allows the researcher to critically evaluate the research outcomes. In this study, I took measures to address potential bias as the researcher, such as keeping a record of my thoughts and feelings in a journal and also consulting with my research supervisor.

### *3.6.2.2 Focus group semi-structured interviews*

Focus group interviews were used to collect data from the teachers. The teachers were interviewed to obtain more information on how the teachers accommodated

learners with LDR within the classroom. According to Welman et al (2005:201) a focus group interview is composed of a group of people who are interviewed together to give their opinions and express their feelings with regard to questions that they are asked by the interviewer. In the present study, the focus group interviews were semi-structured interviews. The aim of a focus group interview is to gather information from a group of people and not only from one individual (Welman et al 2005:201).

There are some advantages and disadvantages when doing focus group interviews. I will briefly discuss a few of each. The first advantage is that focus group interviews are low-cost and an interviewer could get detailed information from the group (Almeida 2017:379). The second advantage is that focus group interviews allow the interviewer to clarify and elaborate on their answers (Almeida 2017:379). The third advantage is that researchers could share their opinions which could form new ideas amongst the other people in the group (Welman et al 2005:203), thereby enriching the information being collected.

A few potential disadvantages in using focus group interviews will now be discussed. The first potential disadvantage of focus group interviews is that some participants may feel intimidated by the other participants in the group and therefore may be reluctant to express their feelings and thoughts (Welman et al 2005:203). The second possible disadvantage is that focus group interviews can be difficult to organise, because there are many logistical arrangements to ensure that the participants arrive at the interview at the same time and place (Bryman et al 2014:238). The third possible disadvantage is that the transcribing of the interviews takes long because there are different speakers talking during the interview which make transcriptions arduous (Bryman et al 2014:238). The fourth possible disadvantage is that the analysis of the data can be difficult due to the amount of data a focus group interview produces, which makes it difficult to incorporate the discussion themes as well as the patterns in which interaction takes place (Bryman et al 2014:238).

As the interviewer it was essential to ensure that the people who were selected for the focus group interview would be open and confident in the interview so that they could express their opinions freely. Therefore, I ensured that all participants felt comfortable

by clearly explaining the process the focus group interview would follow, laying down ground rules, of respect for diversity of opinion, that there were no correct or incorrect views and that differences in views were acceptable. I ensured to include all the participants during the interview by encouraging all to share their views. I conducted the interview at the participants' workplace at a convenient time for the participants.

Focus group interviews were scheduled for two hours, and the interviews were conducted in English. The interviews were scheduled in the afternoon after school. The interviews were recorded, and the recordings were transcribed. An example of the focus group interview is attached as appendices F and G.

The interviewees signed a consent form before the interview, and I offered a copy of the interview form after the interview had taken place. This ensured that the participants voluntarily decided to participate in the interview; that they understood that the interview would be recorded and transcribed and that the information that was gathered would be used in this research study.

### **3.7 DATA ANALYSIS**

The data analysis and interpretation design for the current qualitative research study was guided by the thematic analysis technique. A thematic analysis identifies themes in the qualitative research study which is guided by the theoretical framework of the study (Clarke & Braun 2013:121). Braun and Clarke (2006:120-123), describe the thematic analysis as a method in which the collected data identifies, analyses and reports on different themes emanating from the collected data. The data is organised, and the researcher is able to give detailed descriptions on the data and to interpret many different aspects of the research topic.

A theme identifies the importance of the data in connection with the research questions and it is important that I addressed the research questions by putting all the evidence together in different themes (Clarke & Braun 2013:123). According to Clarke and

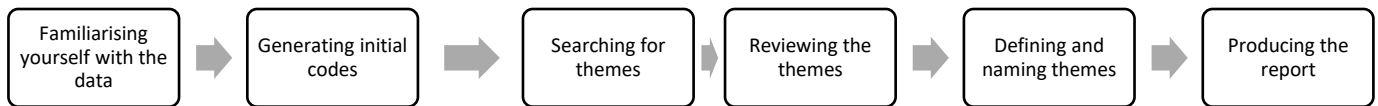
Braun (2013:123) thematic analysis involves going from data set to data set to analyse the produced and collected data.

The most important part of the analysis is the writing part because writing starts in the first phase and continues through to the last phase in the cycle of thematic analysis. I was able to record and interpret the collected data by being sure that the data was relevant and whether it was necessary for me to collect more evidence (Yin 2018:164).

The thematic analysis method could display certain advantages and disadvantages. The first advantage is that thematic analysis provides the researcher with a flexible approach which allows the researcher to alter the data according to the needs that arises in the research study, which provides rich and detailed data (Nowell, Norris, White & Moules 2017:2). Javadi and Zarea (2016:39) further explain that the flexibility approach helps less experienced researchers to not feel helpless when they have to analyse the data. The second advantage is that thematic analysis can be sub-divided into groups. These groups include a theoretical and conversational analysis (Braun & Clarke 2006:77). Thematic analysis when divided into groups, provides rich data using the information received from theory and the data gathered from the conversational interview. Nowell et al (2017:2) explain that thematic analysis is a more accessible type of research because it does not need a detailed theoretical knowledge, which means that the collected data does not depend on theories. The third advantage is that the method is easily understood by researchers, and it provides researchers with procedures on how to do a thematic analysis (Nowell et al 2017:2). The fourth advantage is that the data set can be summarised (Braun & Clarke 2006:86). Thematic analysis forces the researcher to take a well-structured approach when sorting out the research data to ensure that all the key features have been summarised (Nowell et al 2017:2). The results are summarised in an understandable way so that they are easily readable and understood by the public. The fifth advantage is that thematic analysis is viewed as a practical method to discover the different views that participants contribute to the data collection. It allows the researcher to identify the similarities and the differences between the participants' perspectives (Braun & Clarke 2006:86; Nowell et al 2017:2) which provide a rich analysis of data. Some of the possible disadvantages are discussed next.

The first disadvantage is that thematic analysis makes it difficult to develop specific guidelines if the researcher cannot decide which parts of the data to focus on (Braun & Clarke 2006:99). To address this concern, the data analysis was guided by the study's research questions as well as the literature review and the theoretical framework. I also piloted the instruments and did provisional data analysis of the pilot data to gauge if I was on point in terms of answering the research questions with regard to my choice of which data to focus on. The second disadvantage is that thematic analysis is sometimes seen as an easy way to analyse data, because the researcher does not have enough knowledge about analysis of data (Braun & Clarke 2006:100). The third disadvantage is that flexibility can be seen as a disadvantage, because it can be inconsistent and lack unity where themes are developed when analysing the data (Nowell et al 2017:2). The fourth disadvantage is that thematic analysis lacks fundamental literature compared to other research methods, such as grounded theory and ethnographic theory. This might lead to uncertainty in researchers on how to do a thematic analysis (Nowell et al 2017:2). The fifth disadvantage is that thematic analysis does not allow the researchers to make any claims towards how language is used (Nowell et al 2017:2). Language is the way in which we make sense of our world and how we experience the world. This highlights that some participants might have shortcomings with regard to language and that they all perceive their world in a different way (Javadi & Zarea 2016:39).

As a novice researcher I was comfortable to use thematic data analysis and this analytical approach provided rich data in answering the research questions of the study. I mitigated each disadvantage by ensuring that I did thorough research on thematic analysis and understood the process of thematic analysis. I organised the collected data according to themes to make it easier to focus on the parts of data that would answer the research questions. I followed the 6 steps or phases suggested by Clarke and Braun (2013) when embarking on thematic data analysis. These steps are illustrated in Figure 3.2 and a discussion of each step follows.



**Figure 3.2: Phases in conducting thematic data analysis (Clarke & Braun 2013:120-123)**

### **3.7.1 Steps followed in thematic data analysis**

According to Clarke and Braun (2013:122-123, the six non-iterative steps/phases of thematic data analysis are those discussed below.

#### *3.7.1.1 Familiarising yourself with the data*

According to Flick (2018:475) it is important for the researcher to become familiar with the data by doing the transcriptions of the data yourself as well as reading the data several times.

I became familiar with the data by reading the data several times. I read the interview scripts and listened to the recorded answers of the interviews, until I was familiar with the content. I repeatedly read the data in an active way which allowed me to look for different patterns in the collected data. Identification of patterns formed the more I read through the data. I made notes of all the ideas for coding purposes of the data. (Maguire & Delahunt 2017:3355)

Therefore, it was important that the verbal data, in the form of interviews was transcribed so that I could read the interviews and make notes. I made sure that the transcribed data was exactly as the interviewees spoke during the interview. I read through the document analysis several times to ensure that I understood all the content (Maguire & Delahunt 2017:3355).

### 3.7.1.2 *Generating initial codes*

According to Clarke and Braun (2013:122-123) initial coding is defined as a process that “involves generating pithy labels for important features of the data of relevance to the (broad) research question guiding the analysis.” The researcher must read the data to become familiar with the data so that the researcher can use the data and write down a list of ideas (Maguire & Delahunt 2017:3355).

I had to organise the data so that it could be used in a meaningful and organised way. Coding is used to take the data and to put it into smaller parts to extract meaning from it (Maguire & Delahunt 2017:3355). The coding process depends on whether the themes are “data-driven” or “theory-driven” (Braun & Clarke 2006:91). The themes for this research study were driven by the research topic which allowed me to collect data that would answer the research questions. The themes identified were based on the data and not on theory aimed at identifying “features of the data set” through the coding process (Braun & Clarke 2006:91).

It was important that I worked through the data systematically to ensure that each data item received attention. I coded the different interviews and document analysis by reading and listening to the data and coding the data line by line. I wrote down notes and used pens with different-coloured ink to make the varying patterns more visible when reading through the notes. I coded all the data and then put all the coded data together. I made use of a mind map to sort out the different themes and codes. The most important thing for me was to ensure that I identified as many patterns as possible. (Maguire & Delahunt 2017:3355).

### 3.7.1.3 *Searching for themes*

Themes refer to patterns in the collected data. A theme gives a detailed explanation of the information and is seen as an organising method. A code is short and basic and is like a label that you attach to the theme that you are analysing. The third phase can only start when the researcher has a list of different codes and when these codes have



identified the data set. This phase aims to sort out the different codes and to put these codes into different themes. (Maguire & Delahunt 2017:3356)

I had to search and identify different themes in the data. Themes could be seen as patterns in the data collection. The data was collected and placed under a theme that was relevant to the data. I had a long list of themes. Here I shifted the focus to themes instead of the codes. The codes were separated into different themes and the data was then identified within these themes. I used a table to illustrate the different codes within the themes. (Maguire & Delahunt 2017:3356). Tables 3.3 and 3.4 illustrate how codes were categorised under provisional themes.

**Table 3.3: Illustration of provisional themes and codes from analysis of focus group and individual interviews**

<b>Theme A</b>	<b>Teacher knowledge of Learning Disabilities in Reading</b>
<b>Sub-theme</b>	Understanding the concept of learning disabilities in reading
<b>Sub-theme</b>	Training for teacher in teaching learners with learning disabilities in reading
<b>Sub-theme</b>	Support provided to teachers
<b>Theme B</b>	<b>Teacher views and experiences</b>
<b>Sub-theme</b>	Teacher experiences of teaching learners with learning disabilities in reading
<b>Sub-theme</b>	Being equipped to teach learners with learning disabilities in reading
<b>Sub-theme</b>	Mainstream school vs inclusive education
<b>Theme C</b>	<b>Approaches to accommodate learners with Learning Disabilities in Reading</b>
<b>Sub-theme</b>	Remediation and additional learning support for learners with learning disabilities in reading
<b>Sub-theme</b>	Support from teachers
<b>Sub-theme</b>	Support from school

**Table 3.4: Illustration of preliminary themes and codes with regard to document analyses**

<b>Theme A</b>	<b>Accommodations (Concessions) Policy</b>
<b>Sub-theme</b>	Support provided to learners with learning disabilities in reading
<b>Sub-theme</b>	Concession
<b>Theme B</b>	<b>Learner Support policy</b>
<b>Sub-theme</b>	Identification of learners with learning disabilities in reading
<b>Sub-theme</b>	Support provided to learners
<b>Sub-theme</b>	Support provided to teachers
<b>Theme D</b>	<b>CAPS Document</b>
<b>Sub-theme</b>	Information about support in the different subjects
<b>Theme E</b>	<b>Term planning per subject</b>
<b>Sub-theme</b>	Content coverage
<b>Sub-theme</b>	Opportunity for learner support

#### *3.7.1.4 Reviewing the themes*

I had to review the data to see if all the data fitted together. Here I looked at the different themes and checked for coherence of the data within a theme and moved data to other themes to ensure coherence. The research questions were kept in mind when reviewing the data, because the themes had to contribute to answering the research questions (Maguire & Delahunt 2017:3358).

I followed two levels when doing the review of themes. Level one helped me to read through each theme and allowed me to identify if the theme was relevant or not. I made a mind-map that illustrated the themes. Level two helped me to focus on the data as a set and consider the validation of each theme. I looked at the mind-map to ensure that the themes were coherent as a whole (Maguire & Delahunt 2017:3358).

#### *3.7.1.5 Defining and naming the themes*

According to Flick (2018:475) it is important to define and name the themes by using mind maps to visually identify the themes and sub-themes. It is also important to label each theme and to reflect on what each theme presents.

I wrote information about the theme to determine what it was and how it fitted into the study. Each theme was given a name and a description. Once I was satisfied with the mind-map, I identified what the theme was about and described the importance of the theme. Each theme was written like a story so that I could explain the collected data. Themes were also divided into sub-themes when defining and naming the themes. Structure played a very important role, because sub-themes are usually themes within the themes.

By the end of this phase I knew how to define each theme and gave a good description of each theme and how themes were linked together. Each theme received a title that helped me to differentiate between the themes (Clarke & Braun 2013:122-123).

#### *3.7.1.6 Producing the report*

The write-up was the last phase that I had to do when analysing the data. Flick (2018:475) explains that the final step focuses on the results in which the researcher must produce a report on all the findings.

I had to write down the data in a comprehensible and believable way, so that the reader could read the information as if it was a story. The information output was a thesis. The information told a story and gave the reader a clear description of the data analysis. The data was written in a way that communicated with readers, so that readers could understand the data and the different themes. Hopefully, the thesis makes sense to readers and that it is written in a logical and orderly way. Other possible research outputs arising from this study may be the publication of articles in academic journals (Clarke & Braun 2013:122-123).

### **3.8 TRUSTWORTHINESS**

Qualitative research has its own means of ensuring validity and reliability known as trustworthiness. To ensure that the collected data is trustworthy, Kumar (2011:171-172) explains, that Lincoln and Guba identified four factors that need to be taken into consideration when establishing the credibility and trustworthiness of a study: “credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.” According to Anney (2014:279) it is important for researchers to implement the principles and strategies of trustworthiness so that the authenticity of qualitative inquiry can be improved. It is very important for a researcher to remain objective during the research study. I aimed to remain objective by using journaling, reflexivity and bracketing.

#### **3.8.1 Journaling**

According to Hayman, Wilkens and Jackson (2012:28) journaling is a way in which researchers write down their thoughts and feelings when conducting research. Journaling can be used by documenting the information and then reflecting on the information. For the proposed study, I used a journal to record any feelings and thoughts during and after interaction with the participants. This helped me to be aware of my thoughts and feelings regarding the research and hopefully, assisted me in always remaining unbiased and objective. Krefting (1991:218) explains that when a researcher reflects on their notes, it helps to assess the influence qualitative research has which includes the personal history of a researcher. It is advisable to seek out other researchers or academic professionals for guidance and support. In this study, I was in constant communication with the supervisor to discuss the study, raise any concerns and get support and guidance as the study proceeded.

#### **3.8.2 Reflexivity**

According to Palaganas, Sanchez, Molintas and Caricativo (2017:427) reflexivity is seen as the process where the researcher tries to remain objective towards the research study by being involved in the research process and being aware of self. The researcher should also be aware of the influence presented by the participants in order

to identify the challenges that influence objectivity to enable the researcher to identify any personal manifestations (Palaganas et al 2017:429, 432).

Creswell and Creswell (2018:184) contend that reflexivity can be achieved by researchers remaining objective and by reflecting on the information that was presented by the participants. With this in mind, I made notes during the research study about the process of the data collection, what I as researcher was learning from the research as well as concerns about participants' reactions when interviews took place. I recorded all the notes in the form of a memo, so that I could reflect on my progress as well as to consider how my personal experiences might influence the research study. These notes helped me as the researcher to stay focused on the research study.

### **3.8.3 Bracketing**

Baksh (2018:51) explains that bracketing is a process for which researchers must put all their belief systems and personal experiences aside before approaching the study. This helps them to “assess the level of consciousness” so that the researchers can be aware of their thoughts and feelings (Baksh 2018:52). As the researcher, I made use of bracketing in the following ways: I had discussions with my supervisor about my ideas, views and experiences throughout the research process. I made sure to bracket the information by using a journal or memo to write down all my thoughts and feelings towards the research study. Bracketing and reflexivity complimented each other throughout the course of this research.

Therefore, it was important for me to approach the research by making sure that I did not go into the study with assumptions about the research topic. During the research process I relied on journaling to write down all my thoughts and feelings and after each interview I reflected on the notes and made use of reflexivity and bracketing to remain unbiased and objective.

### **3.8.4 Pilot Study**

A pilot study is defined by Fraser, Fahlman, Arscott and Guillot (2018:261) as a study that observes ideas and methods and allows the researcher to decide how to begin the investigation.

Majid, Othman, Mohamad, Lim and Yusof (2017:1074) further explain that pilot studies are usually employed so that particular research instruments can be tested for the study. The purpose of a pilot study is to test the idea on a small scale, to see what works and what does not, before the researcher starts with the actual, longer research study (Fraser et al 2018:261).

Doing a pilot study prior to conducting the actual study is an important activity in improving trustworthiness in a qualitative study. The pilot study was set as a guide to ensure that I appropriately collected and analysed data in the actual study. I selected participants for the pilot study who displayed the same characteristics as the actual population and sample. These participants were not part of the actual research project and were only used for the pilot study. The aim of the pilot study was to focus on the research questions and to ensure that the interview questions used in the study would be answered.

I had interviews with teachers who participated in this investigation. During these interviews I asked questions that aimed to answer the research questions. During the interviews with the teachers' participants, the teachers gave me suggestions on other questions that could be added to the interview schedule which would help me to answer the research questions. The time used for the interview seemed to be the correct duration, to collect sufficient data towards answering the study's research question.

### **3.8.5 Credibility**

According to Moon, Brewer, Januchowski-Hartley, Adams and Blackman (2016:2) credibility refers to the truth that the researcher displays after having gathered all the data to write up the findings which assist in making recommendations at the end of the study. According to Pandey and Patnaik (2014:5747) credibility is described as actions that analyse and test the information by focusing on what was presented and how it was supposed to be presented. It is very important to ensure that credibility is established. Moon et al (2016:2) further explain that credibility communicates to the research study by shifting focus onto the research design, including all the participants and the collected data.

I determined credibility by using the primary documents and interview transcripts, to discuss the information with the participants and to establish that the information accurately reflected the views they had shared. This is known as member checking. According to Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell and Walter (2016:1802) the term member checking refers to participant confirmation. According to Chase (2017:2690) member checking is a method used to see if the study complies with trustworthiness. Member checking is used with the transcriptions of interviews as well as the analysis of the collected data to confirm that the data is representative of participants' views as well as to validate the findings. This helped me to establish that the collected data was in fact each participant's own views and therefore the collected data would be credible to use.

### **3.8.6 Transferability**

According to Pandey and Patnaik (2014:5749) the results of a study are often suitable for a chosen environment or for a group of people, which makes it difficult for a researcher to draw conclusions in different circumstances and with different groups of people. Transferability is the point to which the results of the study can be transferred from one person to another (Anney 2014:277). To establish transferability, I explained the process of information in a detailed manner so that it could be followed from the

beginning to the end by readers or other scholars wanting to replicate the study. It was important to describe the environment where the data collection took place, because the environment plays an important role in the “transferability of such research inquiries.” (Pandey & Patnaik 2014:5749).

### **3.8.7 Dependability**

Dependability is known as the method in which the data must be tested over time to see if the data remains stable within the conditions of the study (Connelly 2016:435). Moon et al (2016:2) explain that dependability refers to the findings being consistent so that other researchers will be able to test the findings. According to Connelly (2016:435) dependability should maintain an audit trail of the “process logs and peer-debriefing” with other people. Process logs refer to the notes that a researcher makes during data collection which helps with decision-making during the research study. According to Hayman et al (2012:27) journaling can be used as a method to make notes about thoughts and feelings when working with participants. Journaling can help to identify specific objectivities when doing interviews which can be beneficial in determining which objectives were carried out. Journaling is a good way to assess data (Hayman et al 2012:30) and I made sure that a journal was kept. This ensured that I made enough notes so that I could return to them and reflect on the information (Hayman et al 2012:28).

### **3.8.8 Confirmability**

Tobin and Begley (2004:392) explain that confirmability is concerned with the established data and findings and that it is not fabrications of the imagination, but rather directly as a result from the data. According to Connelly (2016:435) it is important that researchers keep and analyse their notes as progression takes place. Confirmability can be achieved only if the researcher is able to make a proper identification of the results and conclusions, so that other researchers can follow the



process and replicate the findings (Moon et al 2016:2). In this study, I established confirmability by keeping a detailed record of all the research activities.

### **3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Research ethics is very important in any research study because research ethics emphasises honesty and truthfulness. This encourages researchers to act with integrity (Walliman 2011:42). According to Walliman (2011:47) the researcher must treat the participants with “ethical considerations” in mind. This section focuses on how the participants were selected for the study, and how they were ethically treated during the research study while they provided me with information that would contribute to the research study.

According to Welman et al (2005:181) it is very important for a researcher to follow ethical behaviour protocol when reporting results and to avoid plagiarism. It is important for researchers to follow the appropriate code of ethics when conducting research. They must therefore ensure that no harm will be done to participants, and that participants are provided with the opportunity to freely participate and freely withdraw from the research study. Welman et al (2005:182) further emphasise that ethical issues include competence, doing a literature review, and avoiding plagiarism and falsification of results. The researcher must ensure that he or she is competent enough when doing research to ensure that no harm is done to the participants. The researcher must do a thorough research of literature and ensure that the research has not already been conducted by other researchers. Researchers must always acknowledge the data that they use from other researchers and must make sure that all results are authentic and not contrived or misleading in any way.

To prevent or minimise conflict of interest to the greatest extent, the research study adhered to the ethical principles guiding academic research. For example, I ensured that there was full disclosure of the aims, scope and intended research outputs of the proposed study so that participants could make an informed decision before giving consent. I emphasised the following ethical principles: anonymity, confidentiality, and

voluntary withdrawal and named the parties who would have had access to the raw data (namely: me and my supervisor). Most importantly, the senior management team of the research site were informed that the research data collected would not be discussed with any member of the school and that the data was intended for the development of a Masters' thesis and a possible academic article. In these outputs, neither the school nor the individual participants would be named to prevent the risk of possible harm in terms of potential reputational damage to the school and/or staff.

I followed ethical procedures to always ensure objectivity when conducting research at the workplace. I conducted a pilot study before the actual data was collected to identify possible problems that might manifest in the research study.

UNISA (2016) has a policy on research ethics which was followed throughout the study to ensure that the research was compiled with the ethical rules as set out by the policy. As a researcher it was very important to make sure that all data was collected in a way which would not harm any participant and that each participant would be protected throughout the study. The ethical measures taken in this study are discussed below.

### **3.9.1 Sequential description of permission that needs to be asked in order to do research study.**

#### **The following steps were taken to get permission to conduct the study**

- Once the research proposal was approved, permission was obtained from the UNISA College of Education Research Ethics Committee (CEDU) so that the research study can be done. An Ethical Clearance certificate was issued by the CEDU.
- The Executive Head (principal) of the school was asked permission to conduct the research study at the school. The Executive Head (principal) gave written consent so that I could approach potential participants.
- Next, I approached potential participants and invited them to participate in the study by first giving them all the information pertaining to the aims, scope, process and outputs of the research. All the ethical considerations were

highlighted for potential participants so that they give informed consent prior to participating in the study. During interviews I asked the interviewees permission for the interviews to be audio-recorded. Participants also signed a consent form prior to participation in the interviews.

### **3.9.2 Important ethical principles that guided the study**

#### *3.9.2.1 Non-maleficence*

Non-maleficence emphasises that no harm may be done to the participants who take part in the research study. To ensure this, participants remained anonymous and their information remained confidential. The participants gave their consent to the study and in return their identity and all their information would remain confidential (UNISA 2016:11).

#### *3.9.2.2 Beneficence*

According to Weinbaum, Landree, Blumenthal, Piquado and Gutierrez (2019:10) beneficence is described as the process which researchers must follow to maximise the benefits of the study to outweigh the potential risks the participant might face. The welfare of the participants is very important, and the researcher must aim to protect the participants by giving the participants all the information that would potentially benefit the participant. The potential benefits of the current study include that its findings may shed light in a holistic manner on the phenomenon under focus, namely the teachers' perspectives on teaching learners with a learning disability in reading. This should also shed some light on what support teachers need to accommodate learners with learning disabilities in reading within the classroom.

### *3.9.2.3 Autonomy or self-determination*

According to UNISA (2016:11) the term autonomy requires that I must respect the autonomy of the participant as well as the participants' rights and dignity. All participants had the right to privacy, and I made sure that the participants' personal information remained confidential. All information that could have identified a participant was changed so that the results could not identify participants in any way. (UNISA 2016:11).

### *3.9.2.4 Informed consent*

Informed consent means that the participants are informed about the study so that they can give their consent after understanding exactly what is expected from them. It is important to acknowledge that informed consent must be done before the participant decides to participate in the research study so that they can have all the information before agreeing to participate in the study. Informed consent, as suggested by Flick (2018:140) must be given by a person who can give such consent. The participants were thoroughly informed about the research study, so that they could give consent. It was also important to ensure that the participants decided voluntarily to participate in the study. Consent letters had been given to the participants in clear language, so that the participants could understand what they agreed to.

### *3.9.2.5 Confidentiality and anonymity*

According to Flick (2018:144) participants must be assured that all the information they provide will be kept in confidence. It should not be possible to identify anyone when the research study is read. In the current study, it was important to "encrypt" specific details of the participants, by changing their names for the study, thereby ensuring that no participants could be identified, by making use of codes.

#### *3.9.2.6 Voluntary withdrawal*

Participants make informed decisions when they decide to participate in a research study. Participants have the right to withdraw voluntarily at any stage if they no longer want to participate in the research study. All data collected from the participants will not be used once they have withdrawn from the research study. Voluntary withdrawal also does not have any negative consequences for participants who no longer wish to be part of the study. In this study participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage and that their withdrawal would have not negative consequences for them.

#### *3.9.2.7 Storing of data*

Kumar (2011:49) suggests that a storage system must be in place in which all the data can be stored. In the current study, hard copies of data were stored in files which were locked in a safe. The hard copies were scanned and loaded onto my personal computer. The e-files are protected by a password, and only I know the password to access the data on the computer.

#### *3.9.2.8 Disposing of records*

According to the UNISA (2016) policy on research ethics, data will have to be kept for a minimum of 5 years. For this study the data will be destroyed after 5 years from the time of collection, which will be in 2025. All hard copies of data, which includes document analysis and interview forms will be destroyed by shredding the data. The shredded paper will then be recycled. All soft copy documents that were loaded onto the computer will be permanently erased from the computer and the recycle bin, and all electronic recordings from interviews will be erased.

#### *3.9.2.9 Access to data*

Only my supervisor and I had direct access to raw data that was gathered for the research study. When the data was analysed, and a report was written about the data it was made available in the form of a dissertation, and the anonymity of the participants was protected.

#### *3.9.2.10 Research outputs*

Prior to participation and as part of informed consent I informed potential participants that the intended research outputs were to submit the dissertation for examination. The researcher would need to inform the College's Graduate Studies Division: Assessment, Research and Examination Support about the intention to submit the dissertation. There may also be the publication of an article(s) in academic journals.

### **3.10 CONCLUSION**

In conclusion the research methodology chapter is seen as the blueprint of the data collection process, and this allowed the researcher to be prepared when collecting the data from the participants as well as when writing the thesis on the collected data. This chapter discussed the research paradigm and the research approach used in this study. The research design, namely a case study design, was explained as well as the sampling and data collection methods were discussed. The data analysis as well as the trustworthiness and ethical considerations of the study were also discussed.

## CHAPTER 4

### PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter aims to present the findings of all the data that were collected in this research study. The researcher used purposive sampling to select participants for the study that contributed towards answering the research questions. The researcher employed one semi-structured individual interview as well as one semi-structured focus group interview to collect data from the participants. The researcher also made use of document analysis as a method of data collection. The findings will be discussed throughout this chapter.

#### 4.2 SAMPLE SIZE

Table 4.1 provides a summary of the participants' subject specialisations.

**Table 4.1: A summary of the participants' teaching subject specialisations**

	English Teachers		Mathematics Teachers		Social Science Teachers		Natural Science Teacher	
	Teacher	Sample coding	Teacher	Sample coding	Teacher	Sample coding	Teacher	Sample Coding
Grade 4 GROUP A	1	A	1	B			1	D
Grade 5 GROUP A	1	C						
Grade 6 GROUP B	1	E	1	F	1	G	1	H
Phase head of intermediate phase				1				
Sample code				I				

The samples size for this research study was 8 intermediate phase subject teachers and 1 intermediate phase head teacher, a total of 9 participants. The intermediate phase teachers (Gr 4 – 6) included: 3 English teachers, 2 Mathematics teachers, 1 Social Science and 2 Natural Science teachers. The role of the phase head acts as the line manager of the intermediate phase department that includes the learners and the teachers. The phase head forms part of the learning support team.

### 4.3 THEMES AND SUB-THEMES IN THE STUDY FINDINGS

The data analysis and interpretation design for the current qualitative research study was guided by the thematic analysis technique. A thematic analysis identifies themes in the qualitative research study which is guided by the theoretical framework of the study (Clarke & Braun 2013:120-123). The themes and subthemes pertaining to the phase head are presented in Table 4.2.

The phase head was interviewed to establish her views and role in providing support to teachers in the teaching of learners with LDR, as head of department as well as a member of the school's learning support team. Her perceptions of teachers' views and experiences of learners with LDR, was also explored.

**Table 4.2: Findings emanating from the interview with the phase head of the intermediate phase**

<b>Theme A</b>	Phase Head's understanding of LDR
<b>Theme B</b>	Phase Head's views and experiences of LDR
<b>Theme C</b>	Identification of LDR
<b>Theme D</b>	Providing support to learners with barriers to learning including LDR
<b>Sub-theme</b>	Lesson-based activities
<b>Sub-theme</b>	Provision of extra lessons
<b>Sub-theme</b>	Peer-mentoring support
<b>Sub-theme</b>	Provision of remedial teachers
<b>Sub-theme</b>	In-service training for teachers
<b>Sub-theme</b>	Concessions



#### **4.3.1 Theme: Phase head's understanding of LDR**

The first theme reflects the phase head's knowledge and understanding of LDR. Understanding the concept of a learning disability in reading as a specific learning disability with an impairment in reading is a crucial aspect of this theme.

This finding suggests that the phase head had a fairly accurate understanding of LDR and that the disability was perceived by her as difficulty in reading accuracy, fluency and comprehension. The phase head described LDR as:

*“Difficulty with reading accuracy, fluency and comprehension. A learner with a reading disability will also display problems with spelling. A learner with a reading difficulty will read below... chronological age when tested.”* (Code I 2020:2).

To ensure that learners develop their reading skills, the phase head explained that learners with LDR need peer assistance to help them to improve their reading skills so that they could become better readers.

The phase head's responses therefore suggested that she had the correct knowledge regarding the definition of a learning disability in reading.

#### **4.3.2 Theme: Phase head's views and experiences of LDR**

The second theme reflects the phase head's views and experiences of LDR. The phase head expressed her feelings towards learners with LDR which influenced the way in which she perceived these learners.

The data illustrated that the phase head's attitude towards learners with LDR was positive. The phase head explained that all learners must be included in the classroom environment and that teachers must provide the learners with enough support. This indicated that the phase head supported the views of inclusive education within this context. The phase head expressed this view in the following excerpt:

*“...you can’t exclude children because of their ...reading ability.”* (Code I 2020:4).

Furthermore, the phase head’s attitude towards learners with LDR indicated that these learners must receive a lot of support in reading, as reflected in the following excerpt:

*“...We need to try and assist them as much as possible with that reading to get them on the level that they are supposed to be at.”* (Code I 2020:4).

The phase head generally expressed a positive attitude towards learners with LDR, however she also suggested that learners with LDR should rather be in a special school where they could better be accommodated if it is discovered that they cannot cope within the mainstream environment. This view is reflected in the following excerpt:

*“...if the child is too weak, we would perhaps then recommend that they go to a school that can assist and support them better than what we can. ...”* (Code I 2020:7).

This concluded that the school would provide support to learners with LDR, but that if their LDR is too severe the school will not be able to provide adequate support to these learners.

According to the phase head, the school views inclusive education as a method that allows all learners to be part of the mainstream environment and to receive learning support where they need it. However, the phase head mentioned that teaching learners with learning disabilities in reading, provides some potential advantages and disadvantages.

The phase head felt that one possible advantage was that learners with LDR would become better readers within a mainstream classroom because once the learners realized that they were not on the same reading level as the other readers, that it would motivate them to work harder to read better. The phase head explained that another possible advantage would be to use peer assistance in the classroom where the other learners can provide support to learners with LDR. This pairing system is at times

more effective than the teacher-learner interactions in getting LDR learners to participate and improve their reading levels. These views are reflected in the following excerpt:

*“it’s a good thing in a sense that they would become motivated to read better. They would practise because they see that they are not on the same level as the other children... it is also good to get children that are good at reading to assist those learners, because sometimes peers assist better than what a teacher can and they, they are more open to that assistance from somebody else with...in the class”* (Code I 2020:4).

However, the phase head mentioned that the possible disadvantage of having learners with LDR in the classroom, was that learners with LDR may slow down the progress of the rest of the class as expressed in the following excerpt:

*“if there is a lot of those children in the class it can hold the rest of the class back... but I think you can’t exclude children because of their, their reading ability.”* (Code I 2020:4).

#### **4.3.3 Theme: Identification and support of learners with LDR**

The third theme reflects the process that the school provides to the teachers in order to identify LDR. The phase head explained the process used to ensure that learners with LDR are identified as well as the different types of support methods so that they can receive support.

At the beginning of the school year, the English Home Language teachers use a certain test to assess learners reading levels such as the Holborn reading assessment. This test is used as a method of identification to determine which learners shows signs of barriers in reading. The phase head stated in the following excerpt:

*“...we use the Holborn reading assessment to assess the reading ages of the children” (Code I 2020:2).*

The Holborn reading assessment has different levels of reading material that correlate with the learners' chronological ages. Learners have to read the material to the teacher. The phase head explained that a learner's actual reading age is identified by using the Holborn reading assessment. Once the actual reading age is identified the reading age is compared with the learners' age. Teachers would place learners in groups that are based according to their reading levels.

This view is reflected in the following excerpt:

*“then decide whether the child is above their reading age or below their reading age. If they are below their reading age according to that Holborn test, then we take them back to the level that they are on and give them readers that are age appropriate for them.” (Code I 2020:2).*

By using this method, the phase head explained that learners are given reading material that matches their reading level. In other words, this assessment method gives teachers an indication of which children struggle with reading and which children are below their reading age.

This assessment allows the teacher to identify the learners' reading levels and to identify learning difficulties in reading. After the teachers had determined the learners' reading levels, teachers then divided learners into their different reading level groups.

Further identification of the specific reading challenges within reading groups can be done by teachers observing if learners have problems with: the repetition of rhymes, spelling, decoding, identifying letters and words and if reading speed is very slow. This view is reflected in the following excerpt:

*“Teachers can identify possible reading problems when learners have problems with repeating rhymes, spelling, decoding, identifying words and letters or if reading slowly”*  
(Code I 2020:3).

These indicators show teachers where the learner has difficulties and where they need more assistance.

According to the phase head, if the teacher’s interventions in improving a learner’s reading levels are not successful, the learner is referred to a psychologist for further assessment and the possible diagnosis of LDR. The psychologist is the only professional that can formally make such a diagnosis. This view is reflected in the following excerpt:

*“...a formal diagnosis can only be made by a qualified educational psychologist.”*  
(Code I 2020:3).

The phase head reported that there is a protocol at school to access support for learners with LDR which is known as the learner support policy. The phase head explained that the intermediate phase teachers are aware of process that they must take through the learning support team to identify learners with LDR. The Learner Support Team is made up of the Head of school, the phase head and the register teacher (teacher assigned as the class teacher, who does not necessarily teach all the subjects to the class). Teachers must make sure that they provide learners with support before they refer them for a psychological assessment. Learners can only be referred to the learner support team if the teachers did everything possible to provide support to the learner, but their intervention failed. This sentiment was expressed as follows:

*“we have a learner support team that is made up of the Head of school, the Phase Head and then the teacher is involved. If she feels there is a concern, they fill out a learner support form where they, ... Give information to what they’ve done, what they feel the problem is with the learner... They have to give evidence to the team, ... then it is decided if the child need to go for an educational assessment, a professional*

*educational assessment and, ... then if that is the case, they go for the assessment. Once we get the report back from the assessment, ...we look at ways in which we can help the child. (Code I 2020:6).*

The phase head explained the process of accessing support from the learner support team and emphasised that teachers must follow the procedures as set out in the learner support policy to ensure that learners with LDR can be identified and supported. An example of support provided by the school for learners with LDR, is the provision of a scribe or reader as a method of support. Extra lessons by class teachers to learners needing support, was another example of school-based support.

In referring the child who displays signs of LDR, the teacher should follow a process to ensure that learners with LDR are identified, the teacher must first complete a learner support form in accordance with the Learner Support Policy. The teacher must then submit this form to the learner support team that evaluates the submission and then refers the learner for formal psychological assessment.

#### **4.3.4 Theme: Providing support to learners with barriers to learning, including learners with LDR.**

The fourth theme reflects the different types of learner support strategies that teachers used as intervention strategies to support learners with LDR. This theme consists of six sub-themes such as: Lesson-based activities, Provision of extra lessons, Peer-mentoring support, Provision of remedial teachers, In-service training for teachers and Concessions.

##### **4.3.4.1 Sub-theme: Lesson-based activities**

The sub-theme in this regard focused on lesson-based activities that teachers implemented within the classroom environment to provide support to learners with LDR. The phase head suggested that the teachers should ensure that they provide

support to learners in the form of phonics programmes which helps learners to improve their phonics skills. Teachers can also assist learners by identifying key words or phrases that can be highlighted so that the learners can show more understanding.

Teachers can break work up into smaller sections. By doing this the teacher can minimise the workload for learners. Another form of intervention is to provide learners support in the form of audio recordings and to repeat instructions. Teachers make use of peer assistance so that the learners can support each other. Teachers provide support to learners through extra lessons. This view was reflected by the phase head with the following statement:

*“Using phonics programmes to reinforce skills, underline or highlight key words or phrases, break work up into smaller sections, use audio recordings, repeat instructions, place learners close to teacher and offer extra lessons.”* (Code I 2020:3).

In light of this extract the phase head showed knowledge about the type of support that teachers could be providing to learners with LDR. The phase head explained the type of strategies that teachers could possibly implement within the classroom environment but did not state whether these strategies are in fact implemented.

The phase head mentioned that teachers should also support learners with LDR by adapting the learning materials to make it easier for learners with LDR to access the curriculum. For example, teachers could use different colour paper, if necessary, to assist the learners with reading content. Colour paper makes the words on the paper seem more stable than on white paper. This means that the words on the paper seem to be stationary instead of ‘moving around’. If teachers adapt their approaches for learners with LDR, teachers could provide learning environments that are stress-free. The following excerpt reflects the phase head’s views with regard to this subtheme:

*“Enlarge print and coloured paper are used if necessary.”* (Code I 2020:7).

#### 4.3.4.2 Sub-theme: Provision of extra lessons

Another form of support that had been mentioned by the phase head was providing extra lessons and individual support to learners with LDR to ensure that these learners cope within the classroom environment. Extra lessons are provided to learners who experience barriers to learning, including those with LDR. These extra lessons usually take place after school. Here learners can get individual support from the teacher. This view is stated in the following excerpts:

*“...extra lessons for the... children, ... individual assistance in class, ... (Code I 2020:2). Extra lessons are offered after school (Code I 2020:).*

#### 4.3.4.3 Sub-theme: Peer-mentoring support

As previously mentioned, the phase head reported that learners are placed in reading level groups so that the learners can provide support to each other. The phase head explained that the teacher had the responsibility to support learners with LDR in the following excerpt:

*“...is up to the individual teachers that...teach the languages to the children to ensure that they do everything that they can in their classrooms to assist those learners.” (Code I 2020:2).*

One of the methods that teachers use to provide support to learners within the classroom when doing academic work is peer-mentoring support. This means that learners sit in groups which allow them the opportunity to assist each other. Learners can provide support to each other, and the teacher can then move around the classroom and provide individual assistance to those learners who need more support.

*“... I think that will come down to your group work. So, if they, if they are in their groups or if they need individual attention then the teacher can sit with that individual child and assist them.” (Code I 2020:3).*



Learners are divided into different groups when teachers do class work. Here, teachers pair stronger learners with weaker learners, so that the stronger learners can provide support to the weaker learners. The stronger learners therefore serve as assistants to the teacher. The reason for pairing strong readers with weaker readers is to help the weaker readers to request assistance from their peer partners if they do not understand the content of the work. This view was expressed in the following excerpt:

*“it is always a good idea for the children to sit in groups, so then they can assist each other with the reading, so you would then pair those children that struggle with reading with children that are good readers. So, you would have a good reader at the group and you would have a weaker reader at the group. ... stronger readers could assist the weaker readers...”* (Code I 2020:4).

#### *4.3.4.4 Sub-Theme: Provision of remedial teachers*

The phase head also mentioned that providing remedial teachers benefits learners with LDR, because they can have access to support immediately, however the school does not provide this service freely and it is up to the parent to request these services.

*“there are on-site remedial teachers but this is at for the parents’ cost... give individual assistance in class... use group reading strategies.”* (Code I 2020:7).

After analysing this sub-theme, the conclusion was drawn that support for learners with LDR is very basic and that more intense support can only be accommodated at the parents’ costs, which means that if the parent cannot afford remedial teachers, then those learners will not receive remedial support.

#### 4.3.4.5 Sub-theme: In-service training for teachers

In-service training refers to the development of skills and knowledge of qualified teachers in practice to ensure that teachers are equipped in teaching learners with LDR. The phase head expressed that the teachers were equipped enough to be able to teach learners with LDR. However, teachers were expected to educate themselves if they felt that they did not have adequate and applicable knowledge for assisting learners with LDR.

The phase head illustrated that it was the teachers' responsibility to ensure that they were equipped enough to teach LDR. It was also the responsibility of the teacher to ensure that they did research that would help them to understand the concept of LDR better. The following extract reflects this sentiment:

*"...the teachers that we have... are very experienced teachers and they have the knowledge that they need to assist these learners... I also feel that if they feel that they don't ... have the correct knowledge, they are free to come and ask to go on extra workshops, if they want to go on extra courses, but we also encourage teachers to do research. ...they can do some research as well from their self."* (Code I 2020:6).

The phase head stressed that teachers attended workshops every term, since that gave them the information that they needed in order to assist learners with LDR as well as receiving articles to read up for further strengthening of knowledge. The type of training was not specified by the phase head. This view was reflected in the following excerpt:

*"There is continuous training, usually once a term. Subject Managers and Subject Specialists are available should teachers require any assistance. Informative articles are sent to teachers to read."* (Code I 2020:5).

The phase head therefore seemed to hold the view that the responsibility solely rested with the teachers to ensure that they had the correct knowledge about LDR and that

the school and the phase head did not prioritise the school's responsibility on ensuring that the teachers are equipped and trained in teaching learners with LDR.

#### *4.3.4.6 Sub-theme: Concessions*

Another form of support mentioned by the phase head are the concessions given to learners with barriers to learning, including those with LDR. The concession policy is seen as another method to support all learners with barriers to learning, including those learners with LDR during formal assessments. According to the interview with the phase head it was evident that the school took steps to ensure that the learners received the help that they needed. Accommodations are made for learners with LDR through concessions by allowing the learner to have a scribe and / or a reader during formal assessments in the form of concessions. This view was expressed as follows:

*“We also have concessions that when it is found that the child does have a reading disability where they need a concession, we will then assist the child with either a reader during formal assessments, ...and sometimes a reader and a scribe.”* (Code I 2020:6).

Concessions are only given to learners once they have been formally diagnosed with a learning barrier or attention deficit, including those learners with LDR. The school also only provides concessions during formal assessments and not with class work. The school has a concession policy which they used as a guideline to provide concession to LDR learners.

### **4.3.5 CONCLUSION**

To conclude the findings emanating from the interview with the phase head included the view that the intermediate phase teachers were responsible for ensuring that they had the skills to teach learners with LDR. The phase head was also of the view that teachers must try to ensure that they are adequately equipped to support learners with

LDR and that the school provides the necessary policies to allow the teachers to take steps to ensure that these learners are accommodated with regard to their learning disability. The phase head mentioned the different types of support that could be used when teaching learners with barriers to learning, including those with LDR.

#### **4.4 THEMES EMANATING FROM THE FINDINGS OF THE FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS**

The thematised findings are listed in Table 4.3.

**Table 4.3: Themes emanating from the findings of the focus group interviews**

<b>Theme 1</b>	Teacher knowledge and understanding of LDR
<b>Sub-theme 1.1</b>	Understanding the term (LDR) in theory
<b>Sub-theme 1.2</b>	Teachers' readiness to teach learners with LDR in practice
<b>Theme 2</b>	Identification of learners with LDR
<b>Theme 3</b>	Inclusive education in a mainstream school
<b>Sub-theme 3.1</b>	Defining inclusive education
<b>Sub-theme 3.2</b>	Strategies used in trying to facilitate teaching in an IE context
<b>Sub-theme 3.3</b>	Assessment accommodations
<b>Sub-theme 3.3</b>	Extra lessons to learners as a method of support
<b>Sub-theme 3.4</b>	Participants' views about the inclusion of learners with LDR in the mainstream school
<b>Theme 4</b>	Teacher observation of teaching learners with barriers including LDR
<b>Theme 5</b>	The delivery of the curriculum
<b>Theme 6</b>	Support provided to participants to equip them to teach learners with LDR
<b>Theme 7</b>	Parental support

The focus group interviews consisted of Grade 4, 5 and 6 participants. Two focus group interviews were held with the intermediate phase participants of the private mainstream school. Group A consisted of grade 4 and 5 participants (Gr 4: Mathematics teacher, English teacher, Natural Science teacher, Gr. 5: English teacher). Group B consisted of grade 6 participants (Gr 6. Mathematics teacher, English teacher, Natural Science teacher and a Social Science teacher). Please note that in instances where it is easy to identify a participant through their subject code, the code of the participant was not mentioned and replaced with 'anonymous' as an identifier.

#### **4.4.1 Theme: Teacher knowledge of LDR**

The first theme reflects the participants' knowledge and understanding of LDR. Understanding the concept of LDR as a specific learning disability with an impairment in reading is a crucial aspect of this theme. This theme consists of two sub-themes: Understanding the term (LDR) in theory and understanding the term in practice. These sub-themes focused on the theoretical and practical understanding of teaching learners with LDR.

##### *4.4.1.1 Sub-theme: Understanding the term (LDR) in theory*

This sub-theme focused on determining whether participants understood what the term LDR means in theory. Both groups of participants showed that they had knowledge and understanding of what the definition of LDR was. These two groups of participants had similar points of view with regard to LDR. Both groups explained that LDR is characterised by difficulty in reading as well as in comprehension. Participants also expressed that learners with LDR experienced difficulties with pronunciation, word recognition and decoding. Learners with LDR find it difficult to identify and understand written words and make errors such as letter reversals. For example: **bed** changes to **deb**. These learners also show difficulties in understanding the information that they read, and they struggle to recognise and pronounce words correctly. Learners with LDR do not have good comprehension skills, they have difficulties with

phonic awareness as well as having difficulties with letter-order and pronunciation of words.

The views of Group A (grade 4 and 5) were expressed in the following excerpts:

*“It is specifically a disability of reading, symptoms of which are: fluency, comprehension, word recognition or decoding.”* (Code C 2020:2).

*“they don’t understand the sentence or that the letters are changing around so nothing makes sense”* (Code C 2020:2).

The views of Group B (grade 6) were expressed in the following excerpt:

*“... a number of factors that contribute to the learner not being able to comprehend what he or she is reading or has read. These factors are: Difficulty identifying letters and/or “letter-order” in words thus altering pronunciation and therefore intended meaning... I also believe that they lack an accompanying Phonemic Awareness.”* (Code H 2020:2).

Both groups showed an understanding that the main problem with regard to LDR is due to comprehension difficulties. Therefore, it was evident that the participants showed a good understanding of LDR when compared to the definition of the DSM-5 (APA 2013:66) that describes specific criteria to identify LDR which includes: reading accuracy, reading rate and fluency, and reading comprehension.

#### *4.4.1.2 Sub-theme: Teachers readiness to teach learners with LDR in practice*

This sub-theme focused on how the participants understood the term LDR and their readiness to teach learners with LDR in the classroom learning environment. Teacher readiness influences how learners with LDR are taught. Both groups mentioned that when having to practically teach learners with LDR, they felt that they did not have enough knowledge about the LDR to successfully teach learners with LDR. Participants mentioned that they would have liked to have given learners with LDR,

the opportunity to learn, but that they did not know exactly how to teach these learners. However, ironically both groups of participants also claimed that they were partially equipped to teach learners with LDR. The reason given for this claim by participants was that they had some experience in teaching learners who experienced barriers to learning including those with LDR due to their number of years of teaching experience.

The following excerpts capture these sentiments:

The views of Group B (grade 6) were expressed in the following excerpts:

*“I honestly don’t feel I’m qualified to do it. I’m so scared that I’m gonna approach it in the wrong way, that I’m gonna mess it up even more.”* (Code E 2020:5).

The views of Group A (grade 4 and 5) were expressed as follows:

*“My answer would be yes. But it’s because of my history, my experience in previous jobs have given me more skills I need to... help those learners. But as far as my education as a teacher – I would have to say no. There’s no way you will be able to deal with these barriers without additional training.”* (Code D 2020:8).

*“I think it depends on your experience... mine has come through experience of teaching and being a mom, otherwise... what I was taught...”* – (Code B 2020:8-9).

The participants of Group A (grade 4 and 5) expressed that even though they found teaching learners with LDR very frustrating at times; they still gave them the opportunity to learn. They stated that it was frustrating because during assessments, learners with LDR could not read the tasks and also because of LDR, these learners fell behind the rest of the class with regard to the pace of the curriculum delivery. These participants also felt that it was their responsibility to be pro-active teachers and to do their own research that would help them to know which strategies they could implement within the classroom when teaching learners with LDR.

The views of Group A (grade 4 and 5) were expressed as follows:

*“Give them the opportunity. But it can be frustrating sometimes because you’ve got to read what’s in the test. They can’t read what’s in the test so I’m feeling it can be a little bit, ugh... teaching them can be a little frustrating...we can make an opportunity for it by reading for them and doing it more orally. ... most of the times it’s difficult to keep them up with everyone else... everyone else is getting it quickly and they [are] just a little bit behind.” (Code D 2020:3).*

*“I think you have to be pro-active as a teacher. If you feel like you are battling with an issue a child has, a basic issue, you need to go do your research and find out everything there is to know about that problem and different strategies to assist them, and really try to implement them in your classroom and lessons.” (Code A 2020:11).*

Participants of group B (grade 6) were afraid that they had not been able to provide effective support to learners with LDR and may actually have made matters worse for these learners in the support that they had provided to the learners. Group B also mentioned that learners with LDR may pretend that the teacher’s interventions are beneficial because the learners may be reluctant to demonstrate to the teacher that his/her interventions may not be helpful. They also mentioned that teaching learners with LDR was complex because they act in diverse ways. Learners are all different and they experience their learning environment in different ways. Because of this, learners learn in different ways.

Group B (grade 6)’s views were expressed in the following excerpts:

*“I feel the same... I feel like OK, I think I’m doing something right, I might be explaining it so they understand. But they’re just saying yes, because now I’m standing at their desk, they’re scared, they don’t actually want me at their desk. And I’m actually not helping the child. So, and then other times I think I’m actually doing OK, but I could be making a big mess of it.” (Code G 2020:5).*

*“...because none of them are the same. None of them react the same to the situation. That’s how I experience it as well.” (Code G 2020:5)*



Furthermore, Group B (grade 6) participants explained that even though they had remedial education as a subject at university level, the subject did not give them the in-depth information that they needed to effectively teach learners with LDR. These participants also felt that the curriculum was too time-consuming which made it impossible for them to provide individual attention to the learners who needed it.

The Natural Science teacher in Group B (grade 6) explained that he sometimes felt equipped in teaching learners with LDR, while at other times he did not feel that he was able to teach them. This teacher also explained that some days were more rewarding than others, which meant that this teacher had days in which he felt that he knew how to teach these learners and that his methods were effective, and other days when he felt that his methods were not that effective when teaching learners with LDR.

Group B (grade 6)'s views were expressed as follows:

*“No... I had a subject which was Remedial teaching, but I don't feel that subject prepared me for the learner sitting in front of me. It was more theory and I don't feel it was practical... I don't think it went in-depth enough for me to be able to assist.”* (Code E 2020:6).

*“No. Sometimes I do and sometimes I do not feel equipped to teach them. Some days are more rewarding than others. The curriculum is too time intensive to devote individual attention to these learners.”* (Code H 2020:6).

In conclusion, it was evident that both groups of participants experienced similar views with regard to their readiness to teach learners with LDR in practice. Although their experiences provided some insight into teaching learners with LDR, they did not feel that they had sufficient knowledge to teach these learners. Thus, it would be beneficial for all the participants to receive training that would help them to become adequately equipped to teach learners with LDR.

#### **4.4.2 Theme: The identification of learners with LDR**

Identifying learners with LDR was a crucial aspect of teaching because it was necessary to identify learners with LDR as early as possible so that these learners could timeously get the support that they needed. Both groups of participants expressed similar views with regard to the identification process of learners with barriers including those with LDR. Both groups mentioned that there was a Learning Support Policy in place which they had to follow when identifying learners with barriers to learning including LDR.

Both groups expressed that although the school had a policy in place to help with the identification of learners with LDR, they did not find the policy very helpful. Participants in Group A (grade 4 and 5) explained that they experienced the policy as a barrier to early identification of learning barriers including LDR, because the process involved was tedious. The reason for the claim was that the teachers were not allowed to request that learners (who presented with learning challenges) be assessed by an educational psychologist in the first two terms of the academic school year.

One teacher of Group A (grade 4 and 5) further expressed her frustration that teachers were not allowed to request an educational assessment by an educational psychologist for a learner at risk in the first two terms of the year to formally diagnose any learning disability such as LDR. This school policy therefore delayed a potential diagnosis which did not benefit learners in need of specialised support. Group B (grade 6) also mentioned that concessions such as making a reader available, or a scribe could only be implemented once the learner had been identified with LDR by a registered psychologist. Unfortunately, this crucial type of support was delayed because of the restrictions placed on referrals of learners to psychologists for evaluations.

The views of Group A (grade 4 and 5) were expressed in the following excerpt:

*I think where we are restricted is, we are not allowed to ask for educational assessments in the first and second term...And I think very often that actually hinders*

*the process because often I think we really identify the children that need an educational assessment because something is wrong, we're just not exactly sure what it is."* (Anonymous).

The views of Group B (grade 6) were expressed in the following excerpt:

*"There is a Concession Policy in place. Learners have to be tested by a professional first before receiving such a concession."* (Code E 2020:5).

Participants also explained that the policy guided them with regard to the protocol to be followed to access support and that they could only use this method of support with the approval of the management team. If a teacher felt that there was a need for the learner to be tested because there might be a learning disability or any other general issues that they had noticed with regard to attention, behaviour or academic weakness, they had to follow the process. They had to complete the learner support form and provide evidence of the support that they as teachers had provided to the learner before referring the learner to the learner support team. Teachers then had to submit the Learner Support form to the phase head so that the referral could be discussed by the Learner Support Team. Only after the teachers had discussed the reason for referral with the Learner Support Team, would the parents be contacted. Once the Learner Support Team and the teacher who requested the referral had spoken to the parent(s) about their concerns that their child might display signs of learning barriers, the Learner Support Team would then provide recommendations including that the parents could take their child for an assessment by an educational psychologist. Although there was a policy in place, the participants expressed their frustration towards the policy.

Group A (grade 4 and 5)'s views were expressed in the following excerpts:

*"If there is a general issue that arises the parents are called in and a "Learner support form" is completed so that the learner can be sent for a full academic assessment."* (Code A 2020:6)

*“We have a learner support team.... (Anonymous). “...where we are restricted is, we are not allowed to ask for educational assessments in the first and second term...And I think very often that actually hinders the process because often I think we really identify the children that need an educational assessment because something is wrong, we’re just not exactly sure what it is.” (Anonymous)*

*“Before a child can be referred to a specialist, the Learner Support Team must be informed.” (Code C 2020:7)*

The views of Group B were expressed in the following excerpt:

*“Our school has a reporting or accountability line that involves the relevant participants and management in the learning experience of every learner.” (Code H 2020:14)*

*“At our school, ... if we identify a learner that we feel need support, we need to complete a learner support form, and hand that to our Head of Department or phase head, who will then discuss with the management team if the learner needs to be placed on support, we also need to provide evidence as to what we’ve done with the learner in class. I feel as it is a Private School there is no Government testing coming in, so parents need to test learners on their own accord and their own account and sometimes that doesn’t happen. So, lot of times ... the only support learners are receiving is extra lessons at school. It thus the filling in of the Learning Support Form does not always lead to proper testing and identification.” (Anonymous)*

In conclusion, participants reported that there was a structure in place that could be followed for assistance to identify learners with barriers, including those with LDR and to get support for them, but that the support was limited and not adequate. Both groups of teachers also mentioned other methods that they used to assist with the identification of learners with barriers, including those with LDR. The Mathematics teacher from Group A (grade 4 and 5) explained that it was important to talk to the learner’s previous teacher to learn about the child’s previous scholastic progress and any other relevant information that would better inform the teacher in supporting the learner. The English teacher of Group A explained that she relied on diagnostic

analysis of assessment tasks to identify a struggling learner by observing how they interpret and answer questions.

The views of Group A (grade 4 and 5) were expressed in the following excerpts:

*“I think speaking to the previous teacher is very important. Finding out what their experiences are and not just glossing over the class as a whole...”* (Code B 2020:4).

*“I think we can also look at assessments...you can look at how they interpret the question and how they answer it.”* (Code A 2020:5).

The Mathematics teacher in Group A (grade 4 and 5) also explained that it was the parents' responsibility to get support for their child once the school reported to the parent that the learner needed support. That meant that the parent had to ensure that the child was assessed by an educational psychologist at their own cost. Unfortunately, some parents could not afford such costly assessments, which meant that in such circumstances, the child was at a disadvantage with regard to accessing the appropriate learning support. Consequently, financial barriers meant that some learners were negatively impacted because they could not get extra support, despite the extra lessons that the school offered because they did not receive the 'expert' recommendations that they would have received had the learner been assessed by an educational psychologist.

The views of Group A (grade 4 and 5) were expressed as follows:

*“It is then at the parent's cost to go to a remedial teacher or a speech therapist or an OT (occupational therapist)”* (Code B 2020:11).

Both groups explained that language teachers used a reading assessment to assess the learners' reading levels of all learners in Grades 4 to 6, to determine whether there was a reading barrier or not. This reading assessment was done at the beginning of the academic year to assess the learners' reading levels. This assessment was called the Holborn Reading Test. If teachers noticed that the learner had a lower reading level than that of their age cohort, teachers would then have to put interventions in

place, until the teacher could refer the learner for an educational evaluation by a psychologist in term 3 of the academic school year.

The views of Group B (grade 6) were expressed in the following excerpt:

*“We use the Holborn reading method to identify the correct reading level of learners in our school. Referrals to specialists can also be done.”* (Code E 2020:5).

#### **4.4.3 Theme: Inclusive education in a mainstream school**

The third theme reflects the participants’ knowledge and understanding of Inclusive Education within a mainstream school environment. It was important to get insight into participants’ understanding of IE because the provision of support to learners with barriers to learning, including those with LDR, at the research site, is supposed to be provided within an IE approach. This theme consists of the following sub-themes: defining inclusive education, providing support to learners with barriers, including those with LDR in the mainstream environment, assessment accommodations and inclusion or exclusion of learners with barriers to learning, and including LDR in the mainstream school environment.

##### *4.4.3.1 Sub-theme: Defining inclusive education*

This theme reflected the participants’ knowledge and understanding of the term Inclusive Education (IE). Both groups of participants had similar views with regard to defining IE. The participants explained inclusive education as providing quality education to learners in one mainstream learning environment regardless of learning barriers such as socio-economic, behavioural, academic, psychological, emotional, cognitive and/or personal history or circumstance.

Both groups explained that the term IE means that all learners are included within the education environment. They emphasised that no learner must be left behind and all learners must receive support regardless of their disability.

The views of Group A (grade 4 and 5) and Group B (grade 6) were expressed in the following excerpts:

*“This means allowing all individuals, no matter their socio-economic, behavioural, academic, psychological, emotional, cognitive and/or personal history or circumstance, to be an active participant in the learning process.”* (Code D 2020:9).

*“Providing quality education to learners in one environment regardless of learning barriers. Ensuring that learners with learning barriers are effectively assisted in the classroom to ensure optimal performance.”* (Code A 2020:10).

*“Education in a mainstream school that accommodates a variety of learners with different needs.”* (Code H 2020:10).

The Grade 5 English teacher in Group A (grade 4 and 5) specifically mentioned that IE to her meant that all learners are placed together in the same educational environment, regardless of their learning barriers. The Mathematics teacher of Group A gave examples of learners who were included in the private mainstream school, for example: a mute, a little person, learners with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Asperger syndrome and Autism.

Group A (grade 4 and 5)’s views were expressed in the following excerpts:

*“Inclusive Education is where all children, regardless of disabilities or special needs are placed together in an educational environment.”* (Code C 2020:10).

*“...one of our learners who is mute... another learner who is a dwarf... a little girl who was slightly impaired. We also have an autistic boy in Grade 4. There are so many children with ...ADD, ADHD, Asperger’s...”* (Code B 2020:10)

The Mathematics teacher in Group B (grade 6) felt that the way a teacher teaches depended on the inclusion of learners' different learning styles and to ensure that the teacher includes the different needs of the learners. The English teacher of Group B (grade 6) mentioned that no child should be left behind regardless of the pace at which they completed tasks. This teacher also explained that the curriculum should be adapted so that it could suit all the different learning styles of learners as well as the use of different teaching methods and assessment types that were based on the learners' specific needs.

The views of the Mathematics teacher of Group B were expressed in the following excerpt:

*“To include all learners and their different learning styles into your teaching. To make sure you include all the different needs of the learners.”* (Code F 2020:11)

*“No child left behind – no matter their pace or ability. To adapt the curriculum so that it suits all learning types. To differentiate teaching and assessments based on the children's needs.”* (Code E 2020:11)

#### *4.4.3.2 Sub-theme: Strategies used in trying to facilitate teaching in an IE context*

The next sub-theme focused on providing support to learners with barriers including those with LDR in the mainstream environment. The aim of this sub-theme was to discover what strategies teachers employed within the mainstream school environment to make it an IE classroom environment for the learners. Both groups of participants expressed similar views with regard to strategies used to apply IE within the school environment.

Some participants in Group A (grade 4 and 5) described that they catered for the different learning styles of learners. These participants explained that they tried their best to meet the learners' specific needs. The Mathematics teacher in Group A explained that she found it easier to provide support to learners with barriers including those with LDR, because she could provide support by using apparatus for



illustrations. The grade 5 English teacher explained that she applied IE by recording and replaying reading or speeches as well as scribing for learners who had any type of learning disabilities including those with LDR.

The grade 4 English teacher also explained that she acknowledged the different types of learners that was in her classroom and tried to include different teaching styles. The Mathematics teacher further commented on the type of support, such as writing on the chalkboard, explaining work, scribing, demonstrating and providing individual assistance to learners who displayed barriers to learning.

The views of Group A (grade 4 and 5) are expressed in the following excerpts:

*“...we are catering for all the different learning styles...”* (Code A 2020:9)

*“I think in Maths it is easier, because I have concrete apparatus to assist kids.”* (Code B 2020:9).

*“At our school we treat all learners equally and try to meet their specific needs e.g., recording and replaying prepared reading / speeches to a teacher where a learner can’t speak in front of the class. ....”* (Code C 2020:10).

*“...you explain it, you write it on the board, you show them what to do. So, you’ve got to think of your different types of learners. We use the scribes. And I think we also pay attention individually to them.”* (Code B 2020:6).

Group B (grade 6) explained that they also applied as many strategies as possible to implement IE in the classroom to assist learners with barriers to learning, including those with LDR. The participants mentioned that they provided learners with individual support to assist those learners who experienced barriers to learning including those with LDR. These participants also used resources such as videos for visual illustration to teach learners.

The Natural Science teacher in Group B explained that it was very important to get learners to engage with the teacher and the lesson to ensure that the learners

participated throughout the lessons. The same teacher also explained that he felt that it was important to reassure learners who experienced barriers to learning, to instil hope that things would get better. This teacher displayed a very positive outlook towards the learners. In addition, this teacher also explained that using audio recordings for texts provided additional support to learners with LDR. The audio recording was used to supplement the reading text. This helped learners to listen to the recording while they were reading the text. This type of support helped learners with LDR because they struggled with reading. The earphones were also seen as a method of reducing distracting noises during lessons by blocking out external noises. In this way, learners were supported to concentrate more efficiently.

The English teacher in group B explained that she practised vocabulary with the learners to improve their vocabulary by using a word wall and word banks so that learners were able to recognize and identify words easily. The teacher emphasised that individual attention must be consistently provided to learners while also providing them with second opportunities if their first attempt was not satisfactory.

Group B (grade 6)'s views were expressed in the following excerpts:

*"You-tube videos suggested for visual explanation." (Code H 2020:14). "... have the reading text supplemented with an audio feed/recording that the learners can have real time access to in class. Learners listen to the audio through headphones to block out most external noises while they read along." (Code H 2020:11).*

*"I will call this learner to my desk. I will explain the text or work again and make notes for the learner. Second opportunities will be given if I feel the first opportunity was below par." (Code E 2020:14). "... in English other than I've got the vocabulary that we are doing on the wall, and we do a word bank, so for them to identify words, but also just still that one-on-one attention has to be constant. We have to try to make that constant." (Code E 2020:9).*

Another strategy of support that both groups of teachers mentioned, was extra lessons after school, that was provided to learners who experienced barriers to learning such

as LDR. Both groups of participants mentioned that they had extra lessons in the subjects in which learners experienced barriers.

The grade 5 English teacher in Group A, stressed that although she provided support in the form of extra lessons in English, she found that time was limited and therefore she could only focus on language aspects and not on any other concepts, such as reading and viewing, listening and speaking and writing with regard to English.

The views of Group A (grade 4 and 5) were expressed in the following excerpts:

*“Due to time constraints we focus mainly on language skills during extra lessons...”*  
(Code C 2020:5).

*“Extra lessons will have to come in here.”* (Code A 2020:8).

The views of Group B (grade 6) were expressed in the following excerpts:

*“For Mathematics, I would invite the learner to extra lessons to help him where he struggles because there is not always time in class to give those learners that extra attention”.* (Code F 2020:14).

In conclusion, it was evident that both groups of participants provided support to learners within the classroom environment. Participants used different strategies to ensure that learners received adequate support.

#### *4.4.3.3 Sub-theme: Assessment accommodations*

This sub-theme focused on the accommodations that the participants made (in line with the school’s Learner Support Policy) to provide support to learners with barriers including those with LDR, when conducting assessments. Both groups of participants expressed similar views with regard to accommodating learners with LDR during assessment.

Both groups of participants agreed that no accommodations were granted during in-class assessments and that learners only received accommodations with formal assessments such as tests or examinations. The teachers mentioned in-class assessments included different assessment tasks such as projects. In-class assessments were done during the lesson-time when a subject was being taught. The Formal Assessment Tasks which referred to the tests and examinations were conducted at a scheduled time outside the lesson times. All the assessments contributed to the final mark that determined whether a learner passed or failed the term. Concessions, such as the provision of a scribe or a reader, were only given to learners when they wrote a cycle test or examination (formal assessment task). No other assessments accommodated concessions.

Group A (grade 4 and 5) participants further explained that assessment accommodations were only given if they were part of the recommendations that an educational psychologist made after assessing a learner. One teacher in group A emphasised that teachers relied on recommendations made by psychologists who diagnosed learners to identify their learning barriers. This teacher further explained that the teachers would implement the recommendations as set out, but only if these recommendations did not compromise the validity of the assessment. This meant that the quality of the assessment still had to be on the same standard than the original assessment. For example, if the educational psychologist recommended that a learner must be accommodated with extra time during an assessment, then, according to the concessions policy, the learner could get up to 20 minutes extra to complete the assessment task.

The Mathematics teacher also explained that the register teachers (teacher responsible for a class although not necessarily teaching all the subjects to that class) read and provided clarity (verbally and by writing on the chalkboard) on the cycle tests, to all grade 4 learners in the first term of the school year (regardless if they had barriers to learning or not). In this manner, the grade 4 learners could be more confident in answering the test questions. This type of support was restricted to term one only to help learners to transition from grade 3 to grade 4.

The views of Group A (grade 4 and 5) were expressed in the following excerpts:

*“In this case we usually follow the recommendations of an educational psychologist, the assessment can be adapted to take the recommendations into account, provided the validity of the assessment is not compromised.”* (Anonymous).

*“... So, ... the Grade 4’s, the first term we read every single test to them completely. ... also we read, we explain it, we write it and we show them....”* (Code B 2020:4).  
*“...You read the test to them. And we can emphasise certain parts, but then you have to do it across the board. You can’t do it for just one.”* (Code B 2020:8).

The participants of Group B (grade 6) mentioned that they provided guidance and second opportunities to the learners with LDR. Only the English teacher in Group B gave an example of how she accommodated learners with barriers to learning including those with LDR. She explained that she would provide formative feedback when assessing the creative writing tasks of learners with barriers to learning. She would then discuss her feedback with the learners and provide some guidance. The learner would be granted a second opportunity to improve on the assessment task before it was graded.

The English teacher in Group B also explained that it was teacher’s preference to determine what type of accommodations the teacher was willing to provide to the learners, for example giving the learner extra time to write a test.

The views of Group B (grade 6) were expressed in the following excerpt:

*I can think of a learner last year – when we did creative writing, uhm, he would follow the writing process and submit with everyone else and when I would mark their final version, I would still mark his, but I would not allocate a mark and I would call him to my class the next day in break I would quickly discuss and I made spelling changes and word order changes for him and I handed it back. So, although it was his final version, I marked it as a draft, and I gave him a second opportunity.* (Code E 2020:9).

*“If you’ve got the time, so they know we’ll give you 10 minutes extra or what the case may be...”* (Code G 2020:9).

*“I think our in-class assessments, we don’t accommodate learners actually. It would be the teacher’s preference... with our formal tests there are accommodations but with normal class assessments we don’t really accommodate them.”* (Code E 2020:9).

In conclusion, it was evident that assessment accommodations are only used when learners write formal cycle tests and examinations. This accommodation was provided in the form of concessions which included the use of a scribe or a reader or both. It was evident that it was the responsibility of the teacher to decide on the type of support that the teacher was willing to provide to the learner within the classroom when doing in-class continuous assessments. This finding showed that the learners with LDR did not get the necessary support throughout all their assessments, and that the support was only evident with a cycle test and examinations.

#### **4.4.3.4 Sub-theme: Participants’ views about the inclusion of learners with LDR in the mainstream school**

This theme focused on the inclusion or exclusion of learners with barriers to learning including those with LDR, in the mainstream school. This theme aimed to find out how the participants felt about learners with barriers to learning including those with LDR within the mainstream school environment.

Both groups of participants had different views with regard to whose responsibility it was to support and accommodate learners with barriers to learning including LDR. However, all the participants expressed that these learners needed adequate support. Two teachers in Group A felt that the school could not successfully accommodate all learners with barriers to learning, including those with LDR, and therefore felt that a special needs school would be the best learning context for those learners who were

not making satisfactory progress despite the support being offered by the mainstream school.

The views of Group A (grade 4 and 5) were expressed in the following excerpts:

*“... we can’t accommodate everybody. There are a lot of kids that cannot be put into a mainstream...”* (Anonymous)

Similarly, the Natural Science and English teachers in Group A expressed that some learners with barriers to learning could cope in a mainstream school if they received adequate support from the teachers. However, these learners would still find the classroom environment difficult because of their barrier(s) to learning and would need a lot of support from their teachers in order for them to cope as reflected by the following excerpt:

*“I think its dependent on the support they receive. ... regardless of the support they receive; it will always be more difficult for that learner. ... and no matter what school they in, it will be more difficult for that learner because they have a barrier, but the more support that they do receive, the easier it is for them to succeed.”* (Code A 2020:7).

The Natural Science teacher in Group A also indicated that the number of learners in a class played a very crucial part in learners’ ability to cope. The bigger the class the more difficult it was to provide individual support to learners with barriers, including those with LDR. The Natural Science teacher explained that some schools have up to 40 learners per class, and that made it difficult for teachers to provide learners with support. However, the school under study had smaller classes which allowed the teachers to be involved within the classroom environment by providing more individual assistance to the learners who had barriers to learning as expressed in the following excerpt:

*“... I think its dependent on how much support they receive, which is also directly dependent on the class size. I mean when you’ve got 40 learners in front of you, it’s*

*very difficult as one teacher to give the support that they need, but...so generally, I think they would have a very difficult time in a mainstream school like that but in certain cases, like ours when there's a bit more, ... hands on – then it's a little easier for them.”* (Code D 2020:7).

The English and Social Science teachers of Group B stated that it was their responsibility as teachers to accommodate learners with barriers including LDR.

The views of Group A (grade 4 and 5) were expressed in the following excerpts:

*.. to a certain extent some children we can accommodate and others we can't accommodate, then obviously, we would then have to send them to special schools. But as an educator it is our responsibility to do everything we can.* (Code A 2020:12)

The views of Group B (grade 6) were expressed in the following excerpts:

*“At the end of the day it is my responsibility if the child sits in front of me...”* (Code E 2020:14).

*“And we need to get the child where they need to be. It is our responsibility...”* (Code G 2020:14).

However, one teacher in Group A was unsure if it really was his responsibility to accommodate learners with barriers to learning, including LDR as reflected in the following excerpt:

*“I am not sure – is it our responsibility to accommodate ...”* (Anonymous)

The participants of Group B (grade 6) took a different approach towards accommodating learners within the mainstream school environment. Some of the participants in Group B showed more support towards referring learners with LDR to Special Needs Schools, while others advocated for Learners with Special Needs Education (LSEN) classrooms within mainstream schools. Most of these participants



advocated that the private mainstream school would rather benefit by having a LSEN classroom then to implement an inclusive education as a whole.

One participant in Group B (grade 6) explained that she would rather want learners with barriers including those with LDR, to attend a special needs school or be placed in a LSEN classroom within the mainstream school environment. Another participant agreed with this view by stating that it would be better for these learners to be in a classroom with a remedial teacher who knew exactly how to teach them.

One participant of Group B stated that LSEN classrooms usually had multilevel teaching, which meant that there are learners of different grades in the same class. Once the learners reached the end of primary school, they would have to go to other schools that would be able to accommodate them. These types of classrooms according to the Social Science teacher would ensure a less stressful environment for the normal classroom teachers, because the teachers would know that learner with barriers including those with LDR, would be in a classroom with a teacher who knew how to teach them.

This view was expressed in the following excerpt:

*“A remedial school, so it’s specialised for them. They can decide LSEN class or special school. If our school was equipped with an LSEN class. We would have certain age groups in the LSEN class and if they reached the age gap they would go to a special school. That LSEN class took a big stress out of our classes, because we knew if the child needed it, it was still in the same school, they were still around their friends, but there was a special class for them, and the teacher knew exactly how to work with those kids. She studied it, she did... her whole course was to learn how to work with these kids. And that will be extremely beneficial. Especially in this school.”*  
(Anonymous).

Two participants in Group B (grade 6) advocated that a separate remedial teacher who studied learning barriers, including LDR, would be more beneficial to the school. This remedial teacher should be employed at the school so that the class teachers

could refer learners with barriers to this teacher during class time. A remedial teacher would be able to provide more support to learners with barriers than his/her peers.

However, the Natural Science teacher of Group B did not agree with his/her peers regarding the need for a remedial teacher. This participant felt that remedial support on its own has negative connotations and that it has a stigma around children who need remedial support. This teacher was fully against a separate LSEN classroom and advocated that IE should be implemented within the normal school environment. The Natural Science teacher suggested that a learning programme that had specific teaching criteria to develop academic skills of learners with barriers to learning, including LDR, should be implemented.

This programme should be part of the normal timetable as a method to assist learners in their problem areas. This meant that there would be a programme that would be developed that focused on addressing learning barriers and to develop better academic skills. This programme would be developed with specific teaching approaches (such as teaching reading to learners who struggle to read) in mind that would assist learners who have barriers to learning, including LDR.

Group B (grade 6) expressed their views as follows:

*“I absolutely agree, LSEN even its multigrade, because I know if you’re thinking, if you have one LSEN class, it might be multilevel teaching...” (Anonymous) “...but definitely that teacher will be equipped to deal with it better than I feel I am. ... so I definitely feel the school needs to employ a remedial teacher.” (Anonymous).*

*“I am not sure. In my opinion the term “remedial” has become synonymous with negative connotations and learners feel stigmatised. I would rather promote a “Learning or Academic Development” programme for learners, which might engender a more positive sentiment. This might be a programme that runs during the normal timetable with specific teaching blocks aimed at assisting learners with problem areas.” (Code H 2020:8).*

It was evident that both groups of teachers had mixed views with regard to implementing IE within a mainstream school. The teachers also had different views within their focus groups which implied that there was no unity amongst the teachers with regard to Inclusive Education at a mainstream school.

#### **4.4.4 Theme: Teacher observation and experiences of teaching learners with barriers including LDR**

This theme aimed to get in-depth information with regard to the participants' observations and experiences of teaching learners with barriers, including LDR. Participants in both focus groups mentioned that they observed learners with barriers to learning, including those with LDR, as learners who have behavioural issues. These learners are frustrated and act out by misbehaving because they do not understand what they are reading, or they just don't understand the work at hand. Participants in both groups mentioned that these learners seek attention in a dysfunctional manner by disrupting the classroom. These learners tend to be untidy and put little effort into their schoolwork. They are satisfied with submitting schoolwork of poor quality. Participants also observed that these learners do not interact with the teacher in the classroom and would rather seek attention by disrupting the classroom environment.

One participant of group B explained that learners with LDR, had low self-confidence. These learners avoid reading because they know that they do not understand the content. According to this teacher, these learners do not even want to attempt reading, rather they ask their friends for the answers. This was seen as a concerning issue, as this claim suggested that these learners did not have the confidence to ask their teachers for help and that they would rather seek peer assistance.

Participants of both groups also explained that LDR learners cannot process the information that they read because they cannot comprehend what they are reading. Consequently, they just write down any answer to complete the work or do not attempt to work and be distracted by something else.

The views of Group A (grade 4 and 5) were expressed in the following excerpts:

*“The comprehension skills are weak and that just filters over into all of the subjects, so it’s not just specifically just comprehension in English. They don’t ... if they can’t comprehend, it literally filters down to all of the different subjects and they struggle, and they feel like they can’t do good.”* (Code A 2020:3).

*“I think...they avoid reading and, ... they just write something for the sake of writing it. Or they become a behavioural problem, where ‘cos they can’t, they find something else to distract them, it causes a problem in the classroom.”* (Code B 2020:3).

The views of Group B (grade 6) were expressed in the following excerpts:

*“Misbehaved, because they don’t want to spend their time reading something that they know they not going to understand. They don’t even want to try...they are going to chat to their friend, maybe find their understanding to the text that they just read or maybe ask someone “Can you just tell me what this word means?”. So now they are disrupting the class, because they don’t know what the word means...”* (Code G 2020:3).

*“...for me it’s frustration that manifests in something else. Because they’re frustrated, but they don’t know how to deal with the frustration, therefore they can act out perhaps sometimes.”* (Code E 2020:4).

*“These learners tend to be less confident when it comes to general interaction in the classroom. They tend to be more disruptive and attention seeking. Their work is generally untidy, and they have a very casual approach. They tend to be satisfied with a diminished effort instead of an increased effort in the classroom and the subject’s academic demands generally.”* (Code H 2020:4).

Both groups of participants identified that learners with LDR showed much frustration towards their learning and scholastic performances. Participants held similar views about the behaviour challenges posed by learners with LDR. Participants found it difficult to teach learners with barriers to learning, including those with LDR.

#### 4.4.5 Theme: The delivery of the curriculum

With regard to the delivery of the curriculum, participants made use of term plans and assessments that had been devised for them by subject specialists (teachers selected by the Head Office of the Private schools' group to develop the curriculum material for all schools– these teachers could be based at any of these Private schools) to help them to deliver the curriculum material. Both groups of participants indicated that they could not make changes to the curriculum content to accommodate learners with LDR because they did not know how to make such changes.

Participants also expressed that the content of the curriculum was too much and that it did not allow time to accommodate and support learners with LDR through activities such as revising schoolwork. However, the Mathematics teacher of Group A (grade 4 and 5) explained that because Mathematics was taught in an integrated fashion rather than teaching math concepts in an isolated manner, this practice offered the opportunity to do revision in mathematics lessons. The English teacher in Group A (grade 4 and 5) felt that learners with LDR were more disadvantaged by the curriculum content, because the pace of getting through the curriculum was too fast to get through and that the content could not be revisited again. Another participant in Group B (grade 6) also supported this claim that the pace to deliver the curriculum was too fast for all learners, let alone learners with LDR.

Group A (grade 4 and 5)'s views were expressed in the following excerpts:

*“I think that there is so much content that is taught, that even just a child without disabilities – it's such a fast pace, that I don't even have enough time to literally sit and revise stuff more tha[n] maybe twice. ... I think a child with a disability is sort of more disadvantaged, because the pace is just so fast and there is so much content to teach.”*  
(Anonymous).

*“I think with Maths – I can say yes. Because we revisit concepts over and over again, we don’t compartmentalise... I think... we can in Maths, but we [are] not a Language, so it’s different.”* (Code B 2020:8)

In addition, one participant (Code E) in Group B (grade 6) felt that she would like to adapt the curriculum content so that she could cater for the diverse learning styles of the children. This teacher, however, further explained that she was not effectively equipped in knowing how to adapt the curriculum content to accommodate learners with LDR and other barriers to learning. This teacher also explained that she wanted to include differentiated teaching and assessments that were based on the needs of the learners in her classroom. However, this teacher mentioned that the assessment tasks were planned for the teachers and that they were not allowed to make changes to the assessment tasks. This indicated that the teachers had to follow the assessment tasks as they had been developed for them and that they did not have the freedom to change the assessment tasks.

The views of Group B (grade 6) were expressed in the following excerpts:

*“...To adapt the curriculum so that it suits all learning types. To differentiate teaching and assessments based on the children’s needs.”* (Code E 2020:10).

*“...slowed down to accommodate the learner, where a lot of times I feel that, unfortunately with the curriculum the way it is, I have to move on.... I only have a certain allocated time per content, and I need to move on. ...”* (Code E 2020:7-8).

*“If I was given the tools, to be able to do that, because I don’t feel I can go sit with my planning and I don’t know if I would be able to know how to adapt it...if I was taught the skill of how to adapt it and given the opportunity, yes I would like to accommodate them.”* (Code E 2020:8).

*“The curriculum is not adapted as much as it could be. Assessments are planned for us, and we cannot change the type of assessment as it suits us...”* (Code E 2020:8).

#### 4.4.6 Theme: Support provided by the school and peer support

This theme focused on the type of support that the participants received from the school and other participants. This theme also aimed to identify whether the support that participants received was adequate or not.

Both groups felt that some level of support was given to them from the school and from peers to ensure that they could teach learners with barriers including LDR. These teachers mentioned that there was a structure in place which they could follow to help them to support a learner who experienced barriers to learning including LDR. This structure referred to the Learning Policy. Teachers relied on the communication between each other to discuss a learner, as a method of support. This helped the teachers to identify the similarities that learners with barriers (including those LDR) displayed in each class and to brainstorm with the other teachers to find ways to provide the learners with support. The Natural Science teacher in Group B also expressed that teachers can make use of assistance through the subject specialists and managers to assist teachers with the delivery of the curriculum. Within the context some participants felt that the school provided adequate support to any teacher that needed assistance.

The Mathematics teacher in Group B also stated that more training was needed to help them to be equipped to teach learners with barriers including LDR.

The views of Group A (grade 4 and 5) were expressed in the following excerpt:

*“I think the school does assist us in a way – to do extra lessons and we have people we can go to and bounce ideas off each other.” (Code B 2020:11).*

*“If I had to think in the broader terms, I think there is structure and, uhm, processes (for lack of a better word) which we can follow that will assist us, like if we are struggling with a learner there is someone you can go and speak to and get support from or get an idea. So, ja, I would say yes in that sense.” (Code D 2020:11).*



*“...I think we need to do more training on learning barriers and...”* (Code B 2020:8-9).

The views of Group B (grade 6) were expressed in the following excerpt:

*“We have access to Subject Specialists and Managers who provide additional assistance and support in delivering the curriculum.”* (Code H 2020:12-13). *“I feel that the school provides adequate support to any teacher that needs assistance...”* (Code H 2020:13).

However, two participants in Group B (grade 6) did not feel the same as the other participants with regard to the support received from the school. The one teacher explained that she needed more support and guidance from the school in teaching learners with LDR. This participant made comparisons to her previous teaching experiences at public schools, with regard to the type of support received from the school. According to this participant, government schools did more to identify learners with barriers including LDR. The other teacher in Group B explained that she would have preferred that the school employ a remedial teacher to support teachers.

*“... what happens in one class might be happening in the other class. So, if you talk to each other you can try and... stop this from happening...”* (Anonymous). *“I was in a government school first – what they would do is they would identify who has problems by the second term, you would fill in a very lengthy form as to why you believe this child has this issue or what issue...”* (Anonymous).

*“... I definitely feel the school needs to employ a remedial teacher.”* (Anonymous).

#### **4.4.7 Theme: Parental support**

This theme referred to parental involvement with regard to learners with LDR. Parental support was seen as an important form of support which was provided to learners with LDR. According to both groups parental support was not always forthcoming from all



parents. The participants in both groups had mixed views with regard to parental support within the focus group.

The Mathematics teacher in Group A felt that some parents would do everything necessary to assist the teacher and their child. However, the same participant also explained that other parents would be resistant towards the teacher when the parent was informed that their child experienced barriers to learning. The reason for resistance was because the parents wanted to know why the barrier had not been picked up earlier such as when the child was in the foundation phase.

The views of Group A (grade 4 and 5) were expressed as follows:

*“...the parents will work on board with us. I think the parents are quite pro-active most of the time.”* (Code B 2020:6).

*“...we get a fair amount of resistance from parents, because their thinking is ‘why wasn’t this picked up in Grade one, two or three’...?”* (Code B 2020:12).

*“Sometimes and sometimes not. That’s very parent specific – some parents are very supportive they will go to the ends of the earth with whatever you suggest to help the child and they will do their bit at home as well to help their child...”* (Code A 2020:12).

The Natural Science teacher in Group B felt that parental support was an essential, non-negotiable component of assisting a learner who had a learning disability. The English teacher in Group B further supported this claim and explained that support from parents were not always available, because parents did not always want to acknowledge that their child had a learning barrier.

The views of Group B (grade 6) were expressed as follows:

*“Parental support has been a hit and miss affair in my experience. Some parents will do everything necessary to assist the teacher and their child while others will not acknowledge that their child has a learning disability or if they do, will not agree with*

*the extent to which the teacher grades their child's learning disability.”* (Code H 2020:13).

*“the parents... don't want to admit that there's a problem and that stops a lot...”* (Code E 2020:15).

Both groups expressed their views with regard to the parental support that they and the learners received. Both groups agreed that support from parents varied. Some parents would support the teacher and their child, while other parents would not acknowledge that their child had a learning barrier.

#### **4.5 DOCUMENT ANALYSIS**

For the purposes of this study, the researcher collected policy documents related to the case study. Although the school is a private school it follows the CAPS curriculum which is the National Curriculum of public schools in South Africa and is also guided by other DBE policies such as SIAS (DBE 2014b). The documents that were analysed are listed in Table 4.4.

The school's term lesson plans were used for the document analysis because it was assumed that the term plans would provide more information on the CAPS content that has to be covered throughout the term, the assessment tasks as well as teaching methods and enrichment tasks. Teachers at the research sight purportedly designed their own daily and weekly lesson plans and not all the teachers used lesson plans, therefore only term lesson plans were used for this research study. These documents were collected in the following subjects: English Home Language, Mathematics, Natural Science and Social Science because it was felt that these subjects would have a good reflection of how the school accommodated learners with LDR.

**Table 4.4: Documents that were analysed**

<b>Documents that were analysed</b>	
<b>School-based policies and lesson term plans</b>	Accommodations (concessions) policy Learner support policy Lesson term plans: English (Research site 2019a) Mathematics (Research site 2019b) Natural Science (Research site 2019c) Social science (Research site 2019d) (Term plans were selected randomly for analyses)
<b>National Department of Basic Education's curriculum-based documents</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CAPS document (DBE 2011a, 2011b, 2011c, 2011d) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ English (DBE 2011a)</li> <li>○ Mathematics (DBE 2011b)</li> <li>○ Natural Science (DBE 2011c)</li> <li>○ Social science (DBE 2011d)</li> </ul> </li> </ul> CAPS document (DBE 2011e): Guidelines for responding to learner diversity in the classroom

#### **4.5.1 School accommodations (concessions) policy document**

The research site is a private school that has in-house management; but is also managed by the organisation that owns the school. Therefore, the policy of accommodation (concessions) was designed by the head office of said organisation in 2019. This policy was set by using the guidelines of the *National Policy Pertaining to the Conduct, Administration and Management of the National Senior Certificate Examination* (DBE 2014a) that guides assessments in basic public education institutions in South Africa.

This school policy discusses the different learning barriers that the learners may experience. These barriers include: “sensory, physical, speech or communication

impairment, learning difficulty, learning disability, behaviour and/ or psycho-social or psychiatric disorder, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder or specific medical conditions” (Research site 2019e:2).

According to the policy, learners with barriers to learning are eligible to receive assessment and examination accommodations. The policy states that accommodations can be given to “Learners who experience barriers to learning which prevent them from achieving according to their potential during the assessment.” (Research site 2019e:3). This statement indicates that learners with barriers to learning, which includes learners with LDR, are eligible to receive concessions and accommodations for assessments.

The policy also states that a learner who needs an assessment concession must be identified early in a new phase and not later than grade 10. Assessment accommodations granted to learners are re-evaluated at the beginning of each phase (Research site 2019e:2).

#### *4.5.1.1 Assessment and examination accommodations*

The mechanisms for differentiation and/or accommodations (concession) set out by this policy suggests different accommodations when doing **assessments and examinations**: (Research site 2019e:5-6). However, I am only going to highlight those that relate to learners with LDR.

- **Additional time:** Learners can get up to twenty minutes extra if they have learning difficulties, including LDR.
- **Reader:** A person who reads the text in a test or examination to a learner who has a poor reading ability. A reader is only used for a test or examination and a separate venue is required. The policy is not clear about this accommodation for other assessments that fall outside examinations.

- **Scribe:** A person who reads the assessment task items to the learner, then writes the answers to assessment task items, provided orally by a learner whose reading and writing abilities are so unsatisfactory, that the learner cannot accurately reflect his/her knowledge in written format. The scribe therefore writes the responses to assessment task items on behalf of the learner. This accommodation must be done in a separate venue during examinations. A recording of the text must also be provided.
- **Computer:** A learner is allowed to use a computer to type answers when writing an examination. The learner may not make use of predictive text, spell checks or grammar checks. The learner must also have access to a printer so that the work can be printed once the learner has completed the examination. This accommodation needs a separate venue.
- **Spelling:** This accommodation only applies when the learner's chronological age and spelling age have a significant discrepancy. A spelling sticker is placed on the learner's test or examination paper. According to the policy a learner who writes the Language Paper 1 in grade 12, does not receive a spelling concession if the spelling is part of the content knowledge that the learner requires at grade 12. This is however not a fair assessment of a learner with LDR. See the discussion chapter where this aspect of the policy is discussed further.
- **Digital player / recorder:** Learners with learning barriers including LDR can receive a digital player or recorder as a method of accommodation. The policy is not clear about this accommodation for other assessments that fall outside examinations.
- **Oral examination:** Learners with learning barriers including LDR take their examination orally as a method of accommodation. The policy is not clear about this accommodation for other assessments that fall outside examinations.

It was found that the policy on accommodations was unclear about the implementation of assessment accommodations outside of examinations.

#### *4.5.1.2 Process to implement concessions*

The school must follow a process where the school wants to implement concessions for a learner. The process that the school must follow in order to provide concessions to a learner is set out in the policy as follows:

- The School Based Support Team must identify the learners who need assessment accommodations during assessments and examinations.
- The School Based Support Team must discuss the support and accommodations with the parents. This team includes head of the school, phase head, teachers and service providers; for example, such as remedial support, occupational therapists, speech therapists, audiologists, educational psychologists or a play therapist.
- Even though it is a private school, the School Based Support Team must still apply for concessions from the Department of Basic Education in instances where CAPS is implemented. When CAPS is not used, that is when Independent Examinations Board (IEB) examinations are written, the school must apply for concessions from the IEB Accommodations Panel. The IEB Accommodations Panel evaluates the referral and decides on the accommodation that the learner will receive.
- To request accommodations, teachers must submit the following documents to the respective committees. These documents include: (1) a full psycho-educational assessment (assessing the barrier to learning thoroughly by requiring a clinical history), (2) educational assessment (assessing reading, writing, spelling and decoding skills), (3) medical reports, (4) historical evidence, (5) school records and (6) records of intervention. All these documents must be provided for each case.

The accommodations (concession) policy is therefore used by the school once a learner has been identified with a barrier to learning and the school has requested permission to provide concessions from the relevant Accommodations/ Concession Committees.

#### **4.5.2 Learner Support policy**

The Learner Support Policy was designed by the head office of the private organisation that owns the school. The learner support policy aims to guide the interactions between the learners, teachers, support team, therapists and counsellors.

The purpose of the Learner Support policy is to establish and describe the steps that the school and teachers must follow to provide learners with additional support. This policy describes the different functions of the School-based Support Team. The SBST must support the teachers with the identification of learners who need support. The SBST must determine the type of support the teachers need and design a programme for the teachers to implement in the classroom to appropriately support learners who need such support. Once the programme has been implemented in the classroom, the SBST must evaluate and monitor the effectiveness of the programme. Parents must also be included throughout the whole process.

The Learner Support Policy suggests that the following people must be included in the SBST:

- Head of school
- Phase heads
- Teachers
- Service providers, for example: remedial support, play therapist, occupational therapist, educational psychologist, speech therapist and audiologist.

The Learner Support Policy also follows the process detailed in the Screening, Identification Assessment and Support (SIAS) national education policy document (DBE 2014b) which is a guideline for the teachers on how to identify learners with any type of learning or physical disability or impairment such as LDR, and how to access support.

The SIAS guidelines in this school's policy was divided into five sections:

## 1. Support Needs Assessment by the Teacher

At the beginning of each new grade or phase, the teacher must screen learners through observation to identify learners with barriers to learning including those who have physical barriers. This information must be recorded in the learner profile. Once a learner has been identified by the teacher, it becomes the responsibility of the teacher to provide support to the learner. The teacher must speak to the grade head or the phase head to discuss the learner who displays a barrier to learning.

The teacher must complete a Support Needs Assessment form and record a plan of action for the learner which includes adjustment of classroom methodologies, differentiation of content and classroom environment. Teachers should also complete an extra lessons referral form. The teacher must implement the intervention programme for at least four weeks. If the intervention programme does not work; the teacher must make an appointment with the SBST to discuss the needs of the learner who has a barrier to learning.

## 2. Support Needs Assessment by the SBST

Once the teacher has referred the learner to the SBST, the SBST uses the completed support needs assessment form as a guide to review and discuss the learner's barriers to learning. The SBST can advise if the learner should receive remedial therapy, which is educational professional support given by a remedial therapist. The SBST then completes the referral remedial therapy form. Parents must be informed of the support plan before any form of action can be implemented.

At the review date the SBST discusses if the support structure worked or not. If it is evident that it has not worked, the learner must be referred for further professional support. This referral can only take place once the parents have agreed to it and if the school's intervention programme did not work. A referral – health professional form must be completed.



### 3. Referrals

The SBST may refer a learner to external support by professionals if the intervention strategies of the school do not work. The parents are informed about the referral and the parent must sign the Referral – Health Professionals form to give permission for the referral to take place. These professionals include:

- Health-care practitioners
- Remedial services
- Social Services
- Educational psychologists
- Audiologists
- Occupational psychologist
- Play therapist
- Child protection services

Once the learner has been assessed by a professional, a plan of action is taken. The parents are responsible for the payment of the therapist to ensure that the learner receives the support that they need.

### 4. Panel meetings

Panel meetings are there for the teachers, therapists and the head of the school to discuss the progress of the learner.

### 5. Accommodations

Once an educational psychologist has done a full scholastic test or a psycho-educational assessment (as stated in the school's Accommodations [Concessions] policy) and determined the type of support the learner needs, the educational psychologist recommends accommodations or concessions for the learner. Parents must be informed of the accommodations and the parents must give permission for the accommodation.

### **4.6.3 Curriculum Assessment Policy (CAPS)**

The National Curriculum Statement Grades R-12 (NCS) structures the policy on curriculum and assessment within the schooling system. To improve the implementation of the National Curriculum Statement, it had to be amended, and came into effect in January 2012. To replace the Subject Statements, Learning Programme Guidelines and Subject Assessment Guidelines in Grades R-12, a single comprehensive Curriculum and Assessment Policy document was developed for all the subjects (DBE 2011a:3).

The CAPS document includes the following information:

- Time allocation for each subject and phase
- Suggestions of teaching times per week
- Learning and teaching support materials
- Overview of skills, content and strategies
- Content and teaching plans
- Assessment tasks
- Moderation of assessment tasks

The policy also explains that Inclusive Education “should become a central part of the organisation, planning and teaching at each school. This can only happen if all teachers have a sound understanding of how to recognise and address barriers to learning, and how to plan for diversity.” (DBE 2011a:4). This means that it is the responsibility of the teachers to ensure that they implement Inclusive Education within the classroom set-up and that teachers must take the time and make effort to ensure that they recognise learning barriers and how to provide support to learners with barriers to learning.

The term lesson plans that were analysed for this study was set up in accordance with the guidelines of the CAPS (DBE 2011a, 2011b, 2011c, 2011d) documents. The CAPS document for each subject discussed the layout and the content that needs to be covered throughout a term.

The English Home Language CAPS (DBE 2011a) document provided guidance on how teachers must teach reading by looking at the different types of reading: shared reading, guided group reading and independent reading. These guidelines were set out in the policy so that teachers can know how to teach reading. However, this policy does not indicate how reading must be taught to learners with LDR. The CAPS documents for the other subjects did not touch on any reading strategies or methods to teach learners with LDR.

#### **4.5.4 Guidelines for responding to learner diversity in the classroom curriculum and assessment policy statements (DBE 2011e)**

The Guidelines for responding to Learner diversity in the classroom, gives guidelines to “teachers, principals, subject advisors, administrators, school governors and other personnel, parameters and strategies on how to respond to learner diversity in the classrooms” (DBE 2011e:2) in the implementation of the curriculum. The guidelines have been developed so that they can facilitate and support curriculum and assessment differentiation within the classroom environment.

This policy explains what steps teachers can take with regard to implementing the curriculum content and how to provide diversity to learners. The policy covers the following diversity topics:

- Understanding diversity in the classroom
- Responding to diversity through the curriculum
- What is curriculum differentiation?
  - Differentiating curriculum content
  - Differentiating the learning environment
  - Differentiating teaching methods
  - Differentiating assessment
- How do we analyse, record and report on assessment?
- Accessing support for curriculum differentiation

This policy can be used as a guideline for teachers to help them with diversity in the classroom environment as well as to adapt curriculum material by using these diverse guidelines as stated by the policy.

This document mentions some of the diverse learning needs that learners may display in the classroom. It is important for teachers to be responsive to these diverse learning needs of learners. This document only mentions the diverse needs but does not give examples on how to teach learners with diverse needs.

The diverse needs mentioned in the document include: (DBE 2011e:3)

- difficulty in reading and writing,
- hearing, visual and coordination difficulties,
- poverty circumstances,
- health and emotional difficulties,
- difficulties in remembering what they have learned,
- needs for assistive devices and adapted materials, for example Braille.

This document illustrates scaffolding as an example of a teaching strategy that can be used to support learners with diverse learning needs. Learners with barriers to learning, including LDR, generally have difficulty working independently and may require guidance. Scaffolding refers to the individual guidance and support given to learner in need by a teacher or peers (DBE 2011e:9).

#### **4.5.5 Subject lesson term plans**

I collected the subject lesson term plans for each of the different subjects (see Table 4.5) because the term plans had the most information with regard to the curriculum content that must be taught, as well as enrichment tasks to assist learners. After analysing the term plans it was discovered that the term plans are based on the

content that must be covered during a term as set out by the Curriculum Assessment Policy (CAPS) (DBE 2011a).

The term plans were used because they presented all the content that must be covered throughout a term. The term plans did not indicate any types of support for learners with learning disabilities in reading. These term plans list the resources that teachers can use such as textbooks when teaching as well as enrichment resources such as YouTube. Some of the term plans give guidance to teaching content. However, these term plans did not have any specific teaching strategies to help teachers when teaching learners with barriers to learning, including LDR. The term plans were selected at random so that one term plan per subject per grade could be analysed for this research study for logistical and practical purposes.

**Table 4.5: CAPS documents that were analysed**

Subject	Grade	Term
English	4	4
English	5	3
English	6	2
Mathematics	4	1
Mathematics	6	4
Social Science	6	3
Natural Science	4	2
Natural Science	6	1

Overall, the term plans had similarities such as the layout in common. Each term plan (Research site 2019a), had information with regard to content, time allocations, assessment tasks, list of resources and enrichment ideas, except for the mathematics term plan that had some omissions when compared to the other term plans. However, the term plans did not indicate any type of specific support for learners with barriers to learning including those with LDR or any assessment accommodations. All the term

plans consisted of content that must be taught that is part of the curriculum (Research site 2019a).

The English lesson plans focused on the different learning outcomes which included: listening and speaking, reading and viewing, writing and language skills. The English Term plans provided information to the teachers with regard to teaching approaches and different learning outcomes that the learners must be able to grasp. This term plan focused on the different reading styles and how to teach them, for example: shared reading, guided group reading and independent reading. The reading process was also included to explain how reading must take place. The English Term Plans consisted of assessment plans as well as opportunities for enrichment. Enrichment resources such as YouTube videos, worksheets and a language workbook are part of the term plan layout. This lesson plan gave guidance on how to teach reading, however, no specific teaching and learning methods for learners with barriers to learning including LDR were mentioned in the planning (Research site 2019a).

The Social Science lesson term plan (Research site 2019d) identified the textbooks and additional resources that the teachers would need in order to teach the learners. Social Science is divided into two sections: History and Geography. This term plan included assessments, enrichment resources such as YouTube videos as well as teaching methods to explain the specific content. There are also key questions and terminology that expect the learners to think critically about the topics that are being taught. The term plan provides the teachers the opportunity to create extra worksheets and materials which can be used as enrichment or support to learners. This term plan was the most effective in providing diversity for the teachers to help them when teaching learners. This term lesson plan however did not have any specific methods on how to support learners with barriers to learning including LDR (Research site 2019d).

The Natural Science lesson term plan (Research site 2019c) included Robotics as a key element. The Natural Science lesson term plans included a list of resources and equipment that teachers could use to teach the content efficiently. The term plan

included learner assessments which evaluate the learner's knowledge of the content. Extra resources are mentioned in the term plan in the form of links to YouTube videos. There are also key questions and terms that provide learners the opportunity to think critically about the topics that are being taught. The term plan caters for the learners by giving enrichment activities to the learners. Assessment plans are also included in the term plan. This term plan did not have any teaching and learning methods or strategies for learners with barriers to learning including LDR (Research site 2019c).

The only term plans that were not similar to the other term plans, were the Mathematics lesson term plan (Research site 2019b). The lesson Term plans for Mathematics only included all the content that must be covered during the term. The content included different learning outcomes as set out by the CAPS policy. However, the Mathematics Term plans do not provide information to the teachers on how to teach the content and how to support learners when teaching the curriculum material. These term plans do not consist of assessment tasks, enrichment or remedial support information. These term plans are not as detailed as the other subjects' term plans. These lesson term plans provide no guidance to the teachers on how to teach mathematics, and how to teach learners with barriers to learning including LDR (Research site 2019b).

In conclusion, although the lesson term plans reflect the CAPS content, they do not sufficiently reflect how the CAPS curriculum can be adequately delivered within an IE approach and context in line with education policies (EWP, DoE 2001) dictating that CAPS (DBE 2011a, 2011b, 2011c, 2011d) should be taught in an inclusive manner. There is no evidence that the planning of lessons adequately considered the educational needs of learners with barriers to learning, including those with LDR.

## **4.7 CONCLUSION**

This chapter focused on the presentation of the study's findings, emanating from the analysis of the interview transcripts as well as relevant documents to find a deeper insight into the views and experiences of teachers who teach learners with learning disabilities in reading.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

Chapter 4 focused on presenting the results whereas this chapter will focus on the discussion of the results. The aim of the study was to investigate the views and experiences of mainstream teachers in teaching learners with learning disabilities in reading at a mainstream school. The study's research questions are answered in this chapter by referring to the study's findings and related literature.

#### **5.2 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS BY ANSWERING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

##### **5.2.1 Research question 1: What do mainstream teachers understand about learning disabilities in reading?**

This research question is being answered by discussing participants' understanding of LDR in terms of their theoretical understanding as well as their knowledge in application (practise) when teaching learners with LDR. The study found that participants had a fairly accurate theoretical understanding of the concept LDR and mentioned that a learning disability in reading involves difficulties with reading, spelling, comprehension, decoding, word recognition and pronunciation.

This finding is supported by the American Psychiatric Association which considers a learning disability in reading as a language-based learning impairment. Based on this, it is evident that learners with LDR experience difficulties with their language skills. These skills include reading, writing, spelling and the pronunciation of words (APA 2013:66). Another definition of a LDR is provided in the International Classification of Diseases 10th Revision (ICD-10) which was developed by the WHO. The ICD-10 describes LDR as a "specific and significant impairment in the development of reading



skills. These skills are not exclusively accounted for by ‘mental age, visual acuity problems, or inadequate schooling’” (WHO 2016:334). LDR is also formally defined as “a specific learning disorder that is neurological in origin.” (IDA 2017:3).

Document analysis of the school’s *Accommodations (Concessions) policy* found that this policy comprised an inaccurate explanation of what a LDR means. This policy specifically explained dyslexia (LDR) as a difficulty in writing. This explanation is, however, incorrect when compared to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) definition that dyslexia characterised by difficulties with accurate or fluent word recognition, poor spelling abilities and poor decoding skills (APA 2013:67).

The school’s (research site of the current study) *Learner Support Policy* however does not explain what the definition of LDR is but provides a generic definition of barriers to learning as difficulties that result from within the education system, which prevent the learner to access learning and development (Research site 2012:2).

None of the other documents that were analysed in the current study, the lesson term plans nor the two *CAPS* documents (DBE 2011a, 2011b, 2011c, 2011d, 2011e) provide any definitions of LDR. However, the *CAPS Document: Guidelines for responding to learner diversity in the classroom* (DBE 2011e) mentions learning barriers in the policy as part of the diverse learning needs.

Although the participants in the current study understood LDR in theory they all disclosed that they did not have adequate pedagogical knowledge to effectively teach learners with LDR. This finding is reflected in literature. For example, according to Rudiwati et al (2017:272-273), teachers have limited knowledge on what a learning disability in reading is, and this limited knowledge can influence their way of teaching. Teachers in mainstream schools find it difficult to teach learners with learning disabilities in reading (Meijer 2005:10). Teachers might have limited knowledge to teach learners with LDR in appropriate ways, to accommodate the learners’ needs in the classroom (Meijer 2005:10). However, the competency of a teacher does not only depend on their knowledge and skills. but rather the way in which they are applied

(Pit-ten Cate et al 2018:51), which highlights the importance of having specialist pedagogical knowledge when teaching learners with LDR. In addition, teachers who have experience in Inclusive Education tend to show more competence when working with learners who have barriers to learning than teachers who do not have experience in Inclusive Education (Krischler & Pit-ten Cate 2019:2). Therefore, in the current study, although the teachers understood the term, LDR, in theory, their knowledge on how to effectively teach learners with LDR, was limited.

### **5.2.2 Research question 2: How do mainstream teachers cater for learners with disabilities in reading during the preparation and delivery of lessons in their classrooms?**

Since the research site claimed to offer education within an inclusive context (as mentioned in the school's *Learner Support Policy*.), including the planning and delivery of lessons, it was important to firstly gauge participants' understanding of IE. Dalton, Mckenzie and Kahonde (2012:1) state that South Africa opted to use the policy of Inclusive Education to address barriers to learning in the school system, but that teachers lack the understanding when referring to the differentiation of the curriculum to address the diverse learning needs of learners.

The findings of the current study suggest that participants' understandings of IE were that all learners are included within the same (mainstream) education environment, regardless of the type of barriers experienced and all should receive the necessary support. The participants further explained that Inclusive Education is meant to provide quality education to learners in a mainstream learning environment where everyone is included regardless of their barriers. The participants emphasised that no learner must be excluded from the learning environment. This finding is reflected in literature, for example, EWP 6 (DoE 2001) distinguishes between the terms *Inclusive Education* and *mainstreaming*. With regard to mainstreaming, learners are required to fit into the educational system. In contrast, inclusion recognises that all learners experience different needs within the education system. An Inclusive Education system provides support to learners and educators by ensuring that all learning needs are met.

Inclusion focuses on adapting the curriculum and the classroom, so that effective teaching for all diverse needs can take place within the classroom environment (DoE 2001:17).

UNESCO (2003:13) states that inclusion is a process where addressing and responding to the diverse needs of all learners can be met through increasing participation in learning and reducing learners that exclude participation. Inclusive Education refers to how learners with barriers to learning should be included in the education system by presenting the guidance on how to provide support to learners with barriers to learning within the school environment (Swart & Pettipher 2016:3). An Inclusive Education approach allows the teachers to take up the responsibility for the learners with barriers to learning, because teachers must work together to assist these learners in the classroom (Meijer 2005:10).

Document analysis in the current study did not find definitions of Inclusive education in the analysed documents. However, the *Learner Support policy* and the *School Accommodations (Concessions) Policy* did mention that the school can provide support to learners within an Inclusive Environment by using the learning structure and processes to identify learners with barriers to learning and then providing them with support such as concessions. UNESCO (2003:13) states that Inclusive education involves changes and modification to content, strategies, structures, and approaches with the idea to ensure that all learners can be supported in a regular education system.

The planning and delivery of lessons are also reportedly informed by the policies and other documents that guide how teachers ought to cater for the diverse needs of learners at the research site within an IE approach. These documents also guide teachers in seeking support to enhance access to the curriculum by learners experiencing barriers to learning, including those with LDR. Therefore, document analysis was also conducted to gain a deeper insight into teachers' experiences of teaching learners with LDR.

Document analysis in the current study indicated that the school's *Learner Support Policy* was found to be an important reference of support for teachers in the planning and delivery of lessons because it provided teachers with the protocol that needs to be followed to access support for learners with barriers to learning including those with LDR.

It was found that the purpose of the *Learner Support policy* was to establish and describe the steps that the school and teachers should follow to provide learners with additional support when they could not cope with the curriculum. Document analysis of the *Learner Support Policy* indicated that the policy must be read in conjunction with different legislations, including the SIAS (DBE 2014b) policy (Research site 2012:2). The SIAS IE policy of the South African Basic Education system, provides the guidelines on how to identify, assess and provide support to learners who need learning support through using the necessary support programmes (structured interventions that are delivered at schools and in classrooms within a specific time frame) (DBE 2014b:8) so that their scholastic experiences through inclusion can be enhanced. This SIAS policy attempts to map support for learners who experience learning barriers within the context of the National Curriculum Statement (R-12) (DBE 2014b).

Document analysis of the school's (research site's) *Accommodations (Concessions)* policy in the current study, found that concessions could be granted to learners with barriers to learning as a means of supporting such learners during formal assessments. However, a process had to be followed for a concession to be granted (Read chapter 4 for a detailed explanation). Literature based on the principles of Inclusive Education states that the principle of enhancing the learning environment strives to ensure that learning can be possible in a conducive environment so that factors such as learning programmes can be implemented within the school environment (Phasha 2010:168-169). Concessions would therefore qualify as a means of enhancing the learning environment to promote access and success in the learning of the curriculum. Le Roux (2016:28-29) contends that schools should provide learners with LDR with accommodations such as concessions as a method of support in the learning environment.

Participants in the current study expressed their views regarding the strategies that can be used to facilitate teaching learners with LDR. The language teachers from Grade 4 – 6 made use of reading assessments to identify learners' reading levels so that they could provide timeous intervention. Identifying reading levels is an important aspect of providing support to learners with LDR. It was found that once the participants established the reading levels, they would give these learners reading material that is based on learners' reading levels as well as placing these learners in their reading level groups when reading is practiced during class time. Bouwer and Dednam (2016:179) express the importance of establishing the learners' reading levels because this guides the teacher in identifying appropriate learning support strategies such as choosing appropriate reading material for learners.

This type of support however might not be an appropriate approach to support all learners with LDR depending on the severity of LDR, because learners with LDR typically experience difficulties with phonological decoding. When learners learn to read, their phonological and phonemic skills need to be developed. These skills need to be taught to learners in their early years of learning to read. Therefore, schools should implement reading programmes that can develop the phonological and phonemic skills in learners with LDR. Learners with LDR need to practice these skills so that it can help them to read fluently (Sutton & Shields 2016:16). Participants in the current study also mentioned that they were aware that learners had diverse needs and need different teaching styles. Teachers should adapt their way of teaching so that they can provide support to learners. One example is the implementation of teaching phonics. Phonics is where reading is taught through the sounds of letters, grouping of letters, and syllables of words (Nordquist 2018:1). When teaching phonics to learners with LDR, teachers should make use of auditory and visual cues (Nijakowska 2016:50). Johnston (2019:341-342) further supports the use of phonics, because phonics helps a learner to make the connection between sounds and spoken language. Learners with LDR find reading, spelling and pronunciation of words difficult, therefore practicing phonics should be emphasised. Teachers can make use of scaffolding, which was an approach that Vygotsky identified, so that they can provide support to learners during their learning and problem-solving process. Support

includes, inter alia, teacher encouragement and breaking up of work into smaller chunks to help the learner to work independently (Woolfolk 2014:62).

The Phase Head and the language teacher participants mentioned that they made use of word walls to practise vocabulary to support learners with improving their reading skills. None of the other subject teachers mentioned that they practise vocabulary. Scaffolding can be used as a way to support learners to improve their vocabulary. Guiding the learners with using the proper vocabulary assists the learners when they complete activities (Gonulal & Loewen 2018:3). Teachers must give concrete guidance to the learners. Teachers can also model the correct language and vocabulary patterns that the children need to fully complete a task (Gonulal & Loewen 2018:3).

Frankel et al (2016:7-8) assert that reading takes place when the reader absorbs the written text, extracts the meaning from the text, and uses prior-knowledge to understand and make sense of the written text (Frankel et al 2016:7-8). The document analysis of the *English CAPS document* indicated that teachers should make use of vocabulary development so that learners can understand how words are used and formed (DBE 2011a:8-9). Loreman (2017:6-7) suggests that teachers can show pictures that demonstrate the words or sounds when practising reading in the classroom with LDR learners. Teachers can regularly practise sight words in class to help these learners improve their vocabulary. It is important that teachers improve the communication skills of learners with LDR by practising listening and verbal skills (Loreman 2017:6-7).

Some of the participants in the current study explained that they adapted their teaching styles to accommodate diverse learning needs. Teaching strategies that were mentioned included using apparatus for illustrations during a lesson, scribing, reading, recording a text, videos, explaining work, writing on the white board, and providing individual assistance. Literature has showed that the use of Information and communication technology (ICT) can improve teaching and learning in the classroom. ICT includes “the internet, wireless networks, cell phones and other communication mediums.” (Ratheeswari 2018: S45). The use of ICT can help a teacher improve

teaching and learning in pedagogical environments. If the teacher makes use of ICT effectively, this educational resource should enable learners to learn at any level of the educational programme (Ratheeswari 2018:S45). The use of ICT in the classroom to teach learners with LDR is seen as an advantage. The use of ICT such as audio books, spell checkers and text-to-speech software can provide support to learners with LDR so that they can overcome the difficulties they experience with written texts (Reid 2016:360).

Two participants in the current study mentioned that the best method of support is to record reading texts for the learners with LDR so that these learners can listen to the text, thereby reducing their anxiety levels. This finding is reflected in literature because learners with LDR experience high levels of stress and anxiety when it comes to their reading disability. They cannot control their situation, which worsens when they find themselves in social interactions, such as in the classroom environment (IDA 2017:5). Since these learners experience high levels of stress and anxiety, they might experience panic when they are placed in situations where they cannot cope. They feel that they have to work extremely hard at an educational level to be able to succeed which can be very exhausting for these learners (Ebere 2016:5). In addition, the Inclusive Education principle of universal access to learning aims to address the idea that education must be provided to everyone that is part of the society (UNESCO 2000:12). This principle of IE was illustrated by the two participants in the current study because audio-recordings of written texts facilitate access and therefore inclusion by those requiring such support. Education should be available to everyone, and special attention should be given to learners with barriers to learning (Phasha 2010:168-169).

In the current study, document analysis of the *English CAPS document* (DBE 2011a:15) also highlighted the use of audio recordings as a strategy. However, in the current study, only two participants mentioned the use of audio recordings as a method of support for learners with LDR, which implied that in general, participants did not make use of this type of accommodation for learners with LDR in the delivery of lessons. Document analysis of the research site's (school's) *Accommodations (Concessions) Policy* indicated that learners could receive, as a concession, an audio recording of the text when writing a test or examination. However, this concession was



not mentioned by any of the participants during the interviews as a method of support during assessments. This is concerning because it suggests that participants are either not conversant with the policy, or they are aware of the policy but do not implement it as a means of support to learners that require such support. Le Roux (2016:28-29) emphasises the importance of an audio recording of an assessment task as a means of providing adequate support to learners with LDR. The EW6 (DoE 2001) mentions that the curriculum and assessments should be adapted to cater for the diverse learning needs of learners. The National Policy Pertaining to the Conduct, Administration and Management of the National Senior Certificate Examination (DBE 2014a:21) states that provision can be made for learners who experience barriers to learning in the form of concessions. These concessions are listed within the policy. Therefore, the current study found a gap between the policy provisions and its implementation by the participants because if the policy mentions specific concessions for LDR, it is supposed to be implemented within practice. This finding is similar to the claim by Engelbrecht, Nel, Smit and Van Deventer (2016:532) that there is a clear gap between inclusive education policy in South Africa and its application.

Another strategy that participants in the current study used in planning appropriately for the teaching of learners with barriers to learning (including LDR) was to speak to the teachers who had taught these learners in the previous grade. In this manner, they received important information about the learners' academic histories to inform their planning of curriculum delivery to these learners. Finding out the academic histories of learners helps teachers to become aware of the difficulties learners experience and they can then plan appropriately for curriculum delivery. The document analysis of the *Learner Support Team* policy indicated that records of learner "observation, interviews and consultation, reflection, formative actions, previous records" (Research site 2012:4) should be in the Learner Profile. This concluded that had participants in the current study consulted the Learner Profile, they would have also found the histories of the learners, an important information resource for planning support which, they seemingly did not do. Woolfolk (2014:139) explains that learners with LDR must be identified as soon as possible by the teachers so that they can receive assistance from the teachers.



One participant in the current study mentioned the importance of providing support to learners with LDR by giving them formative feedback on their attempts at assessment and discussing the feedback with the learners. Formative assessment feedback can help learners to understand where they are in a learning process, what their goals are, and how they can reach their goals within the learning process (Goldin, Narciss, Foltz & Bauer 2017:386). In support, Nahadi, Firman and Farina (2015:36) claim that the use of formative feedback on assessments can increase the “activity of the process and learning outcomes” of learners. According to Rustaman, Saptono and Widodo (2013:31-40) the use of formative assessment can help teachers to get feedback on the learning process of a learner and to check if the learner’s academic skills have improved. Formative assessment helps teachers to monitor the academic progress of learners. The inclusive principle of equity works towards removing educational disparities so that education can be provided to everyone (Phasha 2010:168-169). In other words, equity refers to the fairness in providing support in educational differences, and in the case of this study, formative feedback advances the principle of equity.

One participant in the current study also mentioned that learners with LDR are given second opportunities to submit the assessment tasks for grading and the awarding of marks. However, the *CAPS Guidelines for responding to learner diversity* (DBE 2011e) document does not mention that a learner can get multiple opportunities to complete an assessment task, but rather that the assessment should be drawn up with the learner’s disability in mind. Vogel (2011:19) mentions that learners are given informal tests (*tests that do not count for formal marks*) these tests can be used to identify if the learners understand the knowledge of the study material and if the learner mastered the content. The SIAS states that assessment must “be varied, including various forms and drawing from various perspectives.” (DBE 2014b:17).

Findings showed that the participants did not adapt the assessments, but only accommodated learners with barriers to learning when writing a test or examination by providing the learner with a scribe or reader. However, the document analysis of the *CAPS Guidelines for responding to learner diversity* (DBE 2011e:18) states that when assessments are based on grade-level attainment of knowledge, such as

content, skills and concepts, learners with disabilities and learning disabilities must be given an equal opportunity to present their understanding of the content. These learners need testing formats and procedures to ensure that they can demonstrate their knowledge. (DBE 2011e:19). Furthermore, these alterations could include extra time, different formats, readers, scribe, electronic equipment (audio recordings or computers), depending on the needs of individual learners to be able to complete the assessment. This curriculum document states that every learner should have access to the “standard of assessment” that would best be suited for their learning needs (DBE 2011e:19).

Participants also mentioned that due to time constraints in daily school routine, the only way in which they sometimes could provide individual support to learners, was in the form of extra lessons after school in subjects that learners found challenging. Landsberg and Matthews (2016:112-113) stated that a learner who experiences reading difficulties needs individual support to help the learner to overcome the difficulties. The teacher can then provide the learner with individual support in collaboration with the SBST. An individual support plan should be drawn up and should be flexible for changes to be made to the plan. This allows the teacher to be able to provide individual attention to the learner. Therefore, if there is no time in class to implement the support plan, it can be used in another timeframe, such as after school.

Participants in the current study reported that they made use of learner peer support as a strategy so that learners with barriers to learning, including LDR can be placed in groups where the learners can provide support to each other, while the teacher moves around the classroom to supervise and provide support when needed.

Regarding the implementation of peer support for learners with LDR, Vogel (2011:3) explains the use of peer learning by making use of the cooperative learning. This method is used to organise the classroom activities into social and academic experiences. Cooperative learning provides support to all learners, regardless of their ability, so that they can function within the environment and reach their potential. However, Woolfolk (2014:343) explains that cooperative learning might not be effective for learners with learning difficulties, because these learners might

experience difficulties understanding new concepts which leads to problems amongst the peers in the group. Another concern raised by Leseayne, Mandende, Makgato and Cekiso (2018:1-7) is that learners with LDR are sometimes bullied by their peers, because of their disability. Learners with LDR feel different from their peers because they struggle to read, spell and write. Leseayne et al (2018:4) found that group learning is not always an effective method of support for learners with LDR if the other learners in the group do not have any barriers to learning. Learners with LDR sometimes feel embarrassed if their peers expect them to provide feedback to the class on behalf of the group. Due to their poor academic performances and difficulty in reading, spelling and writing, these learners are perceived as inferior to their peers and therefore they sometimes experience being bullied by their peers (Leseayne et al 2018:4).

Although participants in the current study mentioned the use of group work, they did not share any in-depth knowledge of using group work to promote learning among learners with barriers to learning including LDR. It was found in the document analysis that the *CAPS Guidelines for responding to learner diversity* (DBE 2011e:32) proposes that “learners sit in heterogeneous groups which will allow for peer mentoring when learners have questions.” Heterogeneous groups refer to groups in which lower achieving learners are learning together with and from higher achieving learners (Otten, Buskens, Przepiorka, & Ellemers 2020:1). This means that learners are able request assistance from their peers when needed (DBE 2011e:15). This document also asserts that a “mixed ability/skill group is useful for project work, learning a new skill or practicing one recently learned, discussing an assignment, problem solving – different objectives and sub-tasks can be assigned to different learners; it promotes co-operation, peer-support and valuing individual contribution.” (DBE 2011e:36). However, this document did not mention if this specific type of group is effective for learners with LDR. In the current study, the Phase Head mentioned that teachers should group learners together, by placing learners who are weaker with stronger learners.

Universal design for learning (UDL) is a teaching approach that can be used in teaching learners with diverse needs in the IE classroom. UDL guides the development of a flexible learning environment and the accommodation of learning

spaces for diverse learning needs (Loreman 2017:4). Regarding learners with LDR, teachers can motivate these learners to participate in reading activities and to provide them with assistance where they struggle. For example, the teachers can take a text and read it aloud to the class, then the teacher can provide opportunity for the learners to read together as a group. Learners would therefore have heard the text read twice by the time the teacher focusses on individual reading (Loreman 2017:4).

Although participants mentioned several strategies in attempting to teach learners with LDR, these strategies seemed to be generic to any classroom lesson and not tailor-made to adequately meet the needs of learners with barriers to learning and especially with specific reference to those with LDR. The participants did not expand on how they would provide tailor-made support to learners with severe reading challenges. They casually mentioned the use of specialised resources such as audio-recordings, but it was not clear if they consistently had audio recordings of all lessons because only two participants mentioned the recording of lessons.

There was no specific reference made to specialised ICT resources to assist learners with LDR (dyslexia). According to literature, the use of technology is an important way to provide support to learners with LDR. Chester (2015:1) explains that assistive technology is beneficial to learners with LDR. Assistive technology such as different software applications that can assist learners with LDR on computers, tablets and smart phones, can provide support to learners with LDR. This finding is reflected in literature by Blackburn (2018:6) who stipulates that technology provides support to learners with LDR to help them to accomplish their academic tasks. Examples of software applications that can support learners with LDR are: Prizmo, DyslexiConnection, The Dragon Voice Recognition Aid and The Natural Reader application (for a detailed explanation on these applications, refer to Chapter 2).

It is important that teachers have pedagogical knowledge of LDR. It was found that the teachers lack specialist knowledge of LDR, therefore they did not adequately provide specific intervention strategies and methods of support to learners with LDR. The teachers understood the term in theory but had poor practical knowledge of how to successfully teach learners with LDR.

### **5.2.3 Research question 3: What are mainstream teachers' views about teaching learners with learning disabilities in reading?**

Besides sharing how they prepared and delivered lessons to learners with LDR (discussed in the previous research question), participants expressed other views that provided a broader understanding of their experiences and perceptions of teaching learners with LDR. These views, together with relevant findings from the document analysis, are discussed in answering this research question.

One of the views shared by some participants was their unpreparedness in teaching learners with LDR. Some participants in the current study, were concerned that their pre-service teacher-training was inadequate in teaching learners with LDR, and that they may, in fact, have exacerbated the learners' challenges through their ineffective teaching methods. This finding is reflected in literature, for example, qualified teachers must attend in-service training because not all of them have the knowledge, experience, and skills to teach learners with barriers to learning, especially learners with LDR (Olivier 2017:6). Gabriel (2018:265) cautions that teachers might lack the experience and confidence to provide effective support to learners with a learning disability in reading even though they are qualified as educators and attend in-service training for specific learning needs. Therefore, the same author proposes the implementation and delivery of specific training and programmes for teachers specifically in LDR is important so that teachers can implement reading interventions strategies appropriately within the classroom environment.

Although participants reported that they were willing to provide adequate support to learners with barriers to learning, including those with LDR; their inadequate skills hindered them in providing adequate support. Vygotsky believed that a learners' learning experience depends on the approach that teachers take to support learners when learning and the type of reassurance that the teachers give the learners to motivate their learning opportunities (Sarker 2019:31).

Participants in the current study mentioned their frustration towards the curriculum content. Some participants in the current study mentioned that it was frustrating

teaching learners with LDR because these learners could not keep up with the pace of the curriculum and assessments were challenging because these learners experienced severe difficulties in reading. Olivier (2017:201) found that teachers who teach learners with LDR, experience challenges regarding the completion of written assessments, because learners with LDR had a slow working pace. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the teacher to address these challenges by responding to the diversity of learners in the classroom through curriculum differentiation by looking at the level of content, learning environment, teaching methodologies and assessments (Olivier 2017:34) The Inclusive Education principle: Emphasis on learning outcomes, provides the educational opportunities for learning which includes values, knowledge, skills and reasoning. This principle helps educators to define the learning outcomes within the learning programme (Phasha 2010:168-169).

One of the views by participants regarding the curriculum, was that the curriculum was too time-consuming which made it impossible for them to provide that individual attention to the learners who needed it. It was found that the teachers felt that they did not have the time to work through all the content and that the content was too much to revisit concepts. One participant also mentioned that due to the pace of the curriculum, the teacher felt that learners with LDR are disadvantaged. A study done by Olivier (2017:209) found that teachers who teach and support learners with LDR, seemed to be flexible in managing their instructional time to help them to cover all the curriculum requirements. However, teachers become anxious when teaching learners with LDR, and they (teachers) believe that they cannot effectively deal with the completion of written tasks in addition to the daily work that needs to be completed and intervention approaches they need to implement for learners with LDR (Olivier 2017:201).

The document analysis of the *CAPS Document: Guidelines for responding to learner diversity in the classroom* indicated that the school curriculum is one of the most significant barriers to learning. These barriers to learning result from the different aspects of the curriculum which includes the content, language, teaching pace, time available to complete the curriculum, classroom organisation, teaching methodologies, assessment and learning support materials (DBE 2011e:19).

The phase head participant had stated that teachers should support learners by adapting the learning materials to make it easier for learners with barriers to learning including LDR, to access the curriculum. However, his subordinates (the other participants) did not share the same view, as they explained that they were not allowed to adapt the curriculum material, because the research site was a private school and was managed by the private organisation that owned the school. Therefore, there was much control placed on the delivery of the curriculum in an education environment that had a top-down management approach. They also mentioned that even if they were allowed to adapt the curriculum, they would not know how to make adaptations to the curriculum material. This finding is another instance of the gap between policy and practice because document analysis of the *CAPS Document: Guidelines for responding to learner diversity in the classroom* indicated that it is crucial to ensure differentiation within the delivery of the curriculum to ensure that all learners have access to learning. The same curriculum must be implemented at schools; however, the delivery of the curriculum and the assessment process should be adapted so that all learners can be accommodated (DBE 2011e:3).

The findings did, however, show that the teachers would adapt the curriculum material if they knew how to make the adaptations. Literature regarding curriculum adaptation in an Inclusive Education environment, indicates that inclusion focuses on adapting the curriculum and the classroom environment, so that effective teaching for all diverse needs can be implemented. When the curriculum material gets adapted it provides support to learners with LDR to have a better experience towards their learning. For example, the LDR learners are given easier reading materials to read, their spelling abilities are not considered during assessment, and the material can even be read to them by the teacher (DoE 2001:17). Vygotsky believed that the extent to which learning occurs, is subject to the approaches that teachers take, to aid learners and in the ways in which teachers encourage and motivate learners (Sarker 2019:31).

The above finding is reflected in literature, for example, if a mainstream school implements IE, it is expected from teachers to teach a multi-level classroom where lessons are prepared in such a way that it includes individual learning styles and that the needs of all learners can be addressed by adapting the curriculum in such a way



that all learners can benefit from it (DoE 2001:18). Literature by Olivier (2017:34) stipulates that a multi-level teaching approach must be used to cater for the diverse needs of learners. The method suggests that teachers give the class a task. The teacher divides the learners into groups according to levels according to their learning needs. Learners are grouped into different levels to ensure that different curriculum materials can be adapted for the specific level group.

This literature is also supported by the Education White Paper 6 where it is stated that in a multi-level classroom lessons are prepared which includes the diverse needs of all learners as well as adapting the curriculum in such a way that all the learners can benefit from it (DoE 2001:18). Furthermore, Rudiwati et al (2017:247) explain that for teachers to be able to adapt the curriculum, they must know the content of the curriculum. Learners with LDR must be included in the mainstream classroom and the necessary accommodations must be made by the teachers to accommodate these learners with diverse learning needs (Rudiwati et al 2017:247). Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory addresses barriers to learning including LDR, because schools, whether it is a mainstream school or a special needs school, need to cater for diverse needs of learners. The socio-cultural theory of Vygotsky influences the concept of Inclusive Education. (Dixon & Verenikina 2007:198). The socio-cultural theory contributes to the "analysis of the school curriculum in the perspective of Inclusive Education" according to Porto, Dos Santos and Teixeira (2018:24704) in order to emphasise that the "conception of curriculum is linked to the pedagogical practice of the teacher in the classroom." Inclusive education is a system that makes changes to the school system to ensure that learners with learning or physical disabilities can be included within the system by ensuring that all diverse needs of learners are catered for (Dixon & Verenikina 2007:198). Similarly, socio-cultural theory focuses on learning and finding solutions for learners with learning difficulties (Pathan et al 2018:232).

Participants in the current study did not report that they adapted assessment tasks according to the cognitive levels of different learners. However, they mentioned that they made use of concessions such as a reader and or a scribe, to support learners when writing a test or examination. Document analysis of the research site's (school's) *Concessions Policy* indicated that the school only provided concessions to learners



with barriers to learning, including LDR if they write a test or examination. In such situations, the type of concessions included: additional time, digital player/recorder, computer/ voice to text/ text to voice, handwriting, oral examination, prompter, reader, scribe and spelling. However, the policy did not accurately indicate which concession must be used for tests or examinations and if any of these concessions were used during other assessment tasks such as assignments and projects.

Participants of the current study reported that the school only provided concessions for a reader and/or a scribe to learners during a test or examination. In addition, participants mentioned that extra time was only given to a learner if needed and at the discretion of the teacher. This finding once again suggests a gap between policy and practice because the participants did not mention using the other types of concessions that were included in the school's Concession Policy. These non-mentioned concessions included the use of a digital player/recorder, computer/voice to text/text to voice software, handwriting, oral examination, prompter and spelling concession. The SIAS (DBE 2014b:58) explains that "Curriculum and assessment adjustments are required to allow learners at multiple levels of functioning to access the curriculum and assessment tasks best suited to his/her needs. Such accommodations can be managed at school or classroom level." This indicates that learners can receive assessment accommodations within the classroom, in other words for all assessment tasks. Teachers should make adjustments during lessons to make the curriculum more accessible to learners with LDR by making allowances to accommodate learners in the way lessons are presented, providing alternatives in the completion of activities, assessments or tests, the learning setting (area) can be changed to suit the learner when doing an assessment, as well as changes to time and scheduling to ensure that the learner can complete the task (IDA 2020a:4-5).

The IDA (2020b:1) states that the accommodations are an integral part of the normal teaching and testing cycle and that these accommodations should not only be used during assessments. It is important to ensure that there are accommodations in the classroom during lessons so that it is possible for learners to learn and demonstrate their learning by fully participating in the classroom instruction. Assessment accommodations refer to the changes to assessments to accommodate the learner to

successfully complete the assessment. Curriculum content, however, needs to be modified so that the learner can complete the content at their level of learning. The zone of proximal development (ZPD) is a concept that Vygotsky identified, as “the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky 1978:86).

Learners should be placed in an environment where they can learn more effectively with someone who gives them the opportunity to solve problems through guidance. This motivates the learner to collaborate with peers, so that the learner can reach their potential (Pathan et al 2018:233). To ensure that learners can learn from others in the ZPD, the use of scaffolding is important. Woolfolk (2014:62) explains that the use of scaffolding should be considered during the learner’s problem-solving process by ensuring the curriculum content can be completed by breaking up the work into smaller pieces so that the learner can be able to work independently.

Document analysis of the school’s *Accommodations (Concessions) Policy* also noted that a learner’s concession must be revised at the beginning of every phase. This raises the question that if a learner experiences any learning barrier in grade 11, whether the learner will then be acknowledged to receive a concession since it is not the beginning of the phase (Research site 2019e:3). There are extrinsic factors that can cause learning barriers to arise at any time. Factors such as environment, home circumstances, upbringing and teaching affect the development and learning and can cause barriers to learning (Vogel 2011:23).

The findings showed that the participants of this current study experienced a great deal of frustration towards the process of the Learner Support Policy (refer to chapter 4 for a detailed explanation on the process). It was found that the steps in the policy had to be implemented by the Learner Support Team (LST), but teachers mentioned that this team was a barrier to early identification of LDR. Participants felt that there were restrictions placed on the referral process, which hindered the process of early identification. The reason for this was that teachers were not allowed to request an assessment from the LST in the first two terms of the academic school year, which

potentially disadvantaged learners with regard to timeous specialist intervention and support. However, this 'rule' was not found in the document analysis of the *Learner Support Policy*. It may well be that the school has implemented this unwritten 'rule' to encourage teachers to take the initial responsibility in trying to actively respond to learning barriers that arise in class. This practice would be in line with IE philosophy to make adaptations in the delivery of the curriculum instead of immediately referring learners for specialist intervention, as would be the case in a medical model approach (Swart & Pettipher 2016:5). However, the practice seems to be frustrating teachers and once more suggests a gap between policy and practice document analysis of the *Learner Support Policy*. It was, however, found that all learners must be screened at admission to the school as well as at the beginning of each phase and that these findings should be recorded in the Learner Profile. There is, however, no evidence that suggests that the learners are screened at admission or at the beginning of a new phase. To enhance the teachers' efforts, the identification should happen sooner in the year and teachers should also consult the Learner Profile.

This indicated that there was a structure in place that can be followed for assistance to identify learners with barriers, including those with LDR and to get support for them, but that the support was limited and not adequate. Literature on the early identification of LDR suggests that teachers in mainstream schools should realise that there are learners in their classrooms who do experience difficulties with learning, such as LDR and it is important for the teacher to identify these learners who experience learning difficulties as soon as possible, so that appropriate intervention can take place (Colvin & Sherman 2018:27). The EWP 6 (DoE 2001:6) says that learners with barriers to learning should be identified in their early years of learning, in the Foundation Phase. This means that learners with barriers to learning should be identified before the age of nine years (DoE 2001:27).

Participants in the current study expressed their views and experiences regarding the participation of learners with barriers to learning, including LDR within the classroom environment. The participants reported that learners with barriers to learning, including LDR avoid interaction with the teacher and learners would rather disrupt the classroom to get attention. This view was reflected in literature as learners with LDR experience

frustration when it comes to learning. It is difficult for learners with LDR to express how they feel and think, because they find it difficult to find the words to phrase their thoughts. (Bushell & Cripps 2012:13; Willcutt & Pennington 2000:1039-1048). Woolfolk (2014:139) explains that learners become frustrated when they experience difficulties in reading, and that their frustration increases as they get older. Eventually these learners may give up because they feel powerless when learning.

Participants in the current study, experienced learners with LDR as having behavioural issues during lessons. Mostly these learners reportedly acted out to avoid reading at any costs. Dednam and Du Plessis (2016:461) explain that learners find themselves in a situation where they cannot cope in the academic sphere, and they do not know how to help themselves to address their learning disability. These learners have limited reading experience (Tunmer & Greaney 2010:229-246) and avoid difficult subjects because they have a fear of learning. These factors impact negatively on learners' behaviour.

Therefore, literature states that teachers should create a positive classroom atmosphere, where learners can feel that they can make mistakes without feeling uncomfortable. It is important to establish an environment for learners with LDR where there is a good relationship between the teacher and the learners (Martin et al 2017:84). The pedagogical knowledge of teachers is important to ensure that learners with special needs, such as LDR, are appropriately catered for. Teachers who have experience in an inclusive education environment tend to have better knowledge and are more competent than teachers who do not have experience in the Inclusive Environment (Pit-ten Cate et al 2018:51). Gwernan-Jones and Budren (2010:66-86) explain that if teachers want to be successful when teaching learners with LDR, teachers must approach these learners with the appropriate knowledge and teaching methods to provide appropriate assistance to learners with LDR.

The current study also reported that learners with barriers to learning, including LDR avoided reading because they did not understand the content. According to the participants, learners with LDR did not read the material and relied on their peers to give them the answers to questions based on the reading material. This was seen as

a concern, because these learners did not feel comfortable enough to ask the teacher for support and would rather ask a peer for assistance.

Participants in the current study experienced learners with barriers to learning, including LDR, as usually having low self-confidence and needed strong motivation from the teachers. This finding is supported in literature by Willcutt and Pennington (2000:1039-1048) who explain that learners with LDR display signs of poor self-confidence. Furthermore, these learners find learning within the classroom challenging which can impact a learner negatively (Turner & Greaney 2009:229-246). These learners mostly feel that they are not clever enough or capable enough to do certain tasks (IDA 2017:6). This eventually causes a learner to fall behind in their schoolwork (Turner & Greaney 2009:229-246). These learners also tended to be satisfied with diminished quality of work. The reason why learners would sometimes be satisfied with diminished work, is that learners with LDR do not always understand their learning disability and they blame themselves for their learning disability. Learners with LDR feel that they are inferior to other learners and that their efforts make very little difference. These learners do not feel empowered and feel that their environment controls them. Learners with LDR experience their learning progress to be slow and frustrating (IDA 2017:5-6).

The findings of the current study also indicated that the participants had mixed views with regard to the type of support that the school provided to the teachers. Some participants felt that the school provided them with adequate support to teach learners with LDR while others felt that the school did not provide efficient support in comparison to the type of support that is given to teachers in public schools.

In the current study, participants stressed the importance of parental involvement. However, participants indicated that although they felt that parental support was important, the support by parents was not always forthcoming. Some participants expressed that once a parent is informed that their child has a barrier to learning, parents tend to blame the teachers for not picking up that their child had a barrier to learning, including LDR in earlier grades. Phasha (2010:168-169) explains that teaching learners cannot be seen as the sole responsibility of the teacher, so that

parents as well as the community, must also assume this responsibility. The current study also found that support from parents was not always available, because some parents did not want to acknowledge that their child had a barrier to learning. According to Vogel (2011:41) parents sometimes deny that their child has a learning disability or physical disability. These parents believe that if they do nothing about the disability, everything will eventually rectify itself in its own time. The inclusive principle of strengthening partnerships indicates that everyone involved in the learner's learning process should take the responsibility to work together, to ensure that everyone benefits from the learning programme. This means that education is not only the responsibility of schools (Phasha 2010:168-169).

In the current study, document analysis of the *Learner Support Policy* indicated that parents are informed if their child has a barrier to learning, including LDR. The parents must give the school permission for their child to receive more specialised assessments by a psychologist, if the intervention strategies by teachers are ineffective. The EWP (DoE 2001) mentions that it is important for early identification of learners with barriers to learning, including LDR. This identification should be done for each individual learner by specialists such as psychologists. However, the current study found that parents were liable for the payment of such a referral. Unfortunately, the participants in the current study also reported that there were instances when parents could not afford such interventions. Parents play an important role in providing support to their child. Socio-economic barriers can negatively impact the access to receive support for the learner. The socio-economic status includes income, level of education and social status (Vogel 2011:39) and impacts the type of support parents can provide for their child.

The majority of participants of the current study, advocated for an LSEN classroom set-up, where learners must be excluded from the mainstream classroom and rather placed in a special classroom that caters for learners with barriers to learning, including LDR. This illustrated that these participants did not support the concept of Inclusive Education. These teachers felt strongly that a classroom with a teacher who is qualified as a remedial teacher would be more beneficial to learners with barriers to learning, including LDR. On the other hand, there were some participants who

supported the principle of inclusive education, but they did not have the skills to help learners with barriers to learning to successfully implement inclusive education.

Teachers' attitudes contribute greatly to the success of Inclusive Education. Teachers either show a positive or a negative attitude towards Inclusive Education (Pit-ten Cate et al 2018:53-54). The ability to teach learners with a learning disability in reading depends on the knowledge and teachers' skills. It has been found that teachers can be stereotypical when it comes to learners with a learning disability in reading. Teachers might portray a negative attitude towards these learners which influences the way in which teachers treat and support learners with a learning disability in reading (Martin et al 2017:77).

Some of the participants also felt very strongly that the school should employ a remedial teacher to provide support to learners with barriers to learning, including LDR. This remedial teacher should have studied learning barriers, including LDR and be available to the teachers during class time, so that the learners can receive learning support. Some of the teachers felt strongly that a remedial teacher would be able to provide more support to learners who experience barriers to learning, than the intermediate phase class teachers who do not have the skills or knowledge. This view was in contrast to the view of the Phase Head participant, who contended that the school had on-site remedial teachers who aid learners with barriers to learning including LDR. However, this support was not freely available, and parents had to pay for such assistance. Mainstream schools do not always make provision for learners with barriers to learning including LDR. Therefore, teachers do not want to take up the sole responsibility to teach learners with LDR, and they rely on the support from remedial teachers and other specialist teachers. (Meijer 2005:10).

#### **5.2.4 Research question 4: How can mainstream teachers' efforts in teaching learners with disabilities in reading be enhanced?**

This research question focused on discovering how teachers' efforts in teaching learners with disabilities in reading can be enhanced. In other words, what can be



done to assist teachers to improve their teaching techniques and skills to effectively support learners with barriers to learning, including those with LDR.

Enhancing teachers' knowledge in theory and in practice when teaching learners with LDR was found to be a crucial aspect of this research study. Teachers must have the correct knowledge about what LDR is, so that they can provide adequate support to learners with LDR. The current study found that participants had a fairly accurate knowledge on what LDR meant in theory, however they did not have sufficient pedagogical knowledge in teaching learners with LDR. Teachers need the skills and knowledge so that they can be competent and equipped to successfully teach in an Inclusive Education environment (Pit-ten Cate et al 2018:50). Knowledge and skills alone, cannot make a teacher competent; rather the way in which knowledge and skills are applied in practice (Pit-ten Cate et al 2018:51), demonstrates teacher competence. Teachers' competence does not only rely on their skills and knowledge, but also on their beliefs and their levels of motivation contribute to their competence (Pit-ten Cate et al 2018:51).

Document analysis of the school's *Accommodations (Concessions) Policy* found that the definition of LDR was incorrect which might have influenced the way in which teachers interpreted the policy in the form of concessions. The definition in the policy must be corrected and reviewed in terms of how better support can be provided to learners with LDR.

The phase head participant of the current study mentioned that the teachers at the school were equipped enough to be able to teach learners with LDR. In contrast, the phase head's subordinates (the teacher participants) in the current study stated that they did not have adequate pedagogical knowledge for teaching learners with LDR. This latter finding is reflected by Meijer (2005:10) who explains that teachers in mainstream schools find it difficult to teach learners with LDR. These contrasting views suggested that the phase head as part of the curriculum management team of the school did not have an accurate impression of teachers' perceptions about their readiness to teach learners with LDR. It is important that schools provide teachers with resources and efficient training so that they can be equipped enough to support



learners with LDR (Sutton & Shields 2016:16). The training of teachers should focus on special education so that the teachers can understand the concept of LDR. This type of training enables a teacher to support LDR learners within the classroom. Training for teachers should also focus on the behavioural cognitive and biological aspects of LDR (S'lungile et al 2020:36). Teachers should receive in-service training to help teachers to be able to identify learners who display difficulties related to LDR so that they can intervene (Knight 2018:210). In this way, teachers' skills and knowledge can be enhanced if teachers receive more in-service training that focusses on LDR.

The Inclusive education principle of broadening the means and the scope of basic education, allows teachers to broaden the learning process in education (Phasha 2010:168-169). For example, if teachers had the accurate knowledge of teaching learners with LDR, teachers would have known that they cannot only identify a learner's reading level and provide support to the learner by giving the learner reading material that is based on their reading level. The teachers would have known that learners with LDR need to be taught phonological skills to help them to improve their reading and to use ICT resources if necessary to facilitate access to the curriculum.

The findings of the current study showed that the school had a support structure in place that could help teachers with the identification of learners with LDR. The type of support mentioned by all participants was the Learner Support Policy. The Learner Support Policy was seen to be implemented by the Learner Support Team. The phase head mentioned that the Learner Support Team consisted of the following people: the head of school, phase head and the register teacher. However, document analysis of the *Learner Support Policy*, indicated that the Learner Support Team (LST) had to consist of the following people: the head of the school, phase head or members of the School Management Team, educators, and service providers, for example, an educational psychologist. Therefore, the composition of the school's LST needs to be reviewed and increased to include education specialists to strengthen the competence of the LST, thereby providing better support for learners with barriers, including those with LDR.

Participants in the current study also experienced much frustration towards the Learning Support Policy. Therefore, the teachers' efforts to identify learners with LDR can be enhanced by looking at the information that the Learner Support policy provides and how the actual implementation of the policy, happens at school. Teachers seemed to be misinformed about when they can refer a learner for an assessment to the LST, and therefore the Learner Support Policy needs to be revised so that it can clearly state when a referral by a teacher can take place.

Participants reported that teachers relied on support from other teachers, the subject specialist and managers, however this finding was not supported by all the participants who indicated that for their teaching efforts to be enhanced, they needed more support from the school to help them with the identification process of learners with LDR as well as providing learners with efficient support. Knight (2018:209-210) contends that it is not expected that teachers diagnose LDR, but that teachers should receive training in LDR, so that the teacher can have the knowledge on how to identify LDR so that they can put intervention programmes in place to support the learners.

Some participants mentioned that the employment of a remedial teacher would enhance their efforts when teaching learners with LDR. A learning support assistant teacher can work well with the class teacher as well as the SBST to ensure that efficient support can be given (Landsberg & Matthews 2016:101).

One participant mentioned that the government schools had better processes in place to provide support to teachers with regard to learners with LDR. However, the document analysis of the *Learner Support Policy* clearly indicated that the SBST should support teachers with the identification of learners with LDR as well as supporting teachers with the development of a support programme for the teachers, learners and parents. (Research site 2012:3). To enhance teachers' efforts, the private school should ensure that the processes that are in place to support teachers are in line with the SIAS (DBE 2014b) policy, so that the Learner Support Policy can thoroughly be revised to ensure that teachers are able to identify learners with LDR earlier.

The findings regarding the implementation of concessions for learners during assessments, tests or examinations was seen as a concern in the current study, because the concessions are not inclusively embraced as stated in the National Policy Pertaining to the Conduct, Administration and Management of the National Senior Certificate Examination policy (DBE 2014b). The school delivers the curriculum in line with policies governing public basic education in South Africa such as the CAPS and Accommodations/concessions policies. Therefore, the school policy on accommodations/ concessions, must be in line with relevant national education policies, both in content and in implementation.

### **5.3 CONCLUSION**

This study highlighted the views and experiences of teachers who teach learners with LDR in one private mainstream school. The study also explored relevant policies and other documents pertaining to support provision for learners with barriers, including those with LDR. The findings showed the effectiveness and shortcomings when identifying learners with LDR and providing support to learners with LDR. Teachers understood what a learning disability in reading was but could not effectively provide support to LDR learners through accommodations and the delivery of the curriculum. The chapter also highlighted suggestions to enhance teacher support in teaching learners with LDR, including closing the gap between policy and practice.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

This study focused on the views and experiences of teachers at one private mainstream school in teaching learners with a learning disability in reading. Teaching learners with a learning disability in reading can be very challenging, especially if teachers are not specifically trained in teaching learners with LDR (Meijer 2005:10). This final chapter presents: a summary of the study's findings, the significance of the study, the study limitations, recommendations to enhance support for learners with LDR, recommendations for further research and the study conclusion.

#### **6.2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

Participants had a fairly accurate knowledge of LDR. Participants understood LDR in theory, but they all disclosed that they did not have adequate pedagogical knowledge to effectively teach learners with LDR.

- The School's Concessions Policy had an inaccurate definition of LDR.
- Participants' understandings of IE were that all learners are included within the same (mainstream) education environment regardless of the type of barriers experienced and all should receive the necessary support.
- The Learner Support Policy of the school provided the protocol that needs to be followed to access support to learners with LDR.
- The Schools' Concession Policy provided the information on what type of concessions the school can provide, however the teachers only made use of a

reader or a scribe. The policy only stated that concessions can be given when learners write a test or examination. Participants reported that additional time was only given at the teacher's discretion.

- Participants who taught English Language as a subject did a reading assessment at the beginning of the year to identify learners' reading levels as part of the process in preparing appropriately for learners with reading challenges such as LDR. Participants focused on improving reading in LDR by focusing on vocabulary development.
- Teaching strategies implemented included the use of apparatus for illustrations during a lesson, scribing, reading, recording a text, videos, explaining work, writing on the white board, and providing individual assistance.
- Participants mentioned that they make use of audio recordings during lessons as a method of support for learners with LDR, however they did not make use of this method when doing assessments, although the concession is listed in the school's Concession Policy.
- Participants relied on other teachers to provide them with academic histories of learners, to inform their planning of curriculum delivery to learners with barriers to learning, including LDR.
- Support to learners with LDR was also provided in the form of formative feedback on their attempts at assessment tasks and discussing the feedback with the learners. Learners with LDR were given second opportunities for submitting assessment tasks for grading and the awarding of marks.
- Teachers experienced much frustration towards the curriculum. The curriculum content was too much, and teachers did not have the adequate skills to adapt the curriculum material. Teachers were also not allowed to adapt the curriculum because the research site was a private school and the organisation owning

the private school strictly managed the curriculum being offered. Teachers also reported not having adequate knowledge in adapting the curriculum.

- Implementing the curriculum was found to be too time-consuming for teachers to work through the content and revisit concepts. Teachers also did not always have the time in class to provide learners with LDR, individual assistance during class time, but provided individual support after school.
- Teachers made use of learner peer support and group work as a method of support for learners with barriers to learning, including LDR during class time. Teachers' strategies seemed to be generic to any classroom lesson and not tailor-made to adequately meet the needs of learners with barriers to learning and especially with specific reference to those with LDR.
- Teachers were concerned that their pre-service teacher-training was inadequate in teaching learners with LDR, and that they may, in fact, have exacerbated the learners' challenges through their ineffective teaching methods.
- Participants did not report that they adapted assessment tasks according to the cognitive levels of different learners to cater for all the diverse learning needs of learners with barriers to learning, including LDR.
- Learners with LDR were reported to avoid reading and to have low self-confidence. These learners also reportedly presented with behavioural challenges and that they were satisfied with submitting work that was not of a high standard.
- There were mixed views regarding the support that the school provided to teachers and the support received by parents. It was also reported that some parents would blame the teachers for not timeously identifying that a learner

had a barrier to learning. Other parents denied that their child had a barrier to learning, including LDR.

- The majority of teachers advocated for a LSEN classroom environment, where there is a classroom in the mainstream school specifically for learners with barriers to learning, including LDR. These teachers did not support an IE system. On the other hand, there were teachers who supported the idea of an IE system, but they did not have the skills to help learners with barriers to learning to successfully implement inclusive education. Participants felt strongly that a remedial teacher should be employed at the school to provide support to these learners with barriers to learning, including LDR.
- Teachers' knowledge on LDR in theory and in practice needed to be enhanced, by ensuring that teachers receive in-service training specifically in LDR, so that they can have the appropriate skills and knowledge to support learners with LDR. Teachers' knowledge should be enhanced, so that teachers can make use of efficient strategies and approaches when teaching learners with LDR.
- Document analysis of the school's *Accommodations (Concessions) Policy* found that the definition of LDR was incorrectly defined which could have influenced the way teachers interpreted the policy regarding concessions for learners with LDR.
- The teachers did not have adequate pedagogical knowledge in teaching learners with LDR, which influenced their preparedness in teaching these learners.
- The school had a policy in place that gives guidelines to teachers on how to identify learners with barriers to learning such as LDR. The composition of the school's LST needs to be reviewed and increase membership by including education specialists to strengthen the competence of the LST, thereby providing better support for learners with barriers, including those with LDR.

- The teachers experienced great frustration about the practice at the school of only permitting learner referrals for specialist assessments after the first two terms of a year. The school's Learner Support Policy needs to be revised to clearly indicate when this assessment can take place.
- Teachers relied on their peers to provide them with support when teaching learners with LDR. A participant mentioned that the support provided by government schools were more effective than those of the private school.
- The full scope of concessions at the research site were reportedly not conducted as is prescribed by the National Policy Pertaining to the Conduct, Administration and Management of the National Senior Certificate Examination policy (DBE 2014b).

### **6.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS STUDY**

The significance of the study is that it focused on an important barrier to learning, namely LDR. Worldwide, it is estimated that a large number of learners with LDR, attend mainstream schools and these learners are expected to cope within the mainstream learning environment (Colvin & Sherman 2018:27). In addition, many South African schools, including some private schools, as is the case in this study, claim to be functioning within an inclusive education context, but their practices are not optimal at times. In addition, there may be a gap between policy and practice, which has been highlighted in this study. Also, some school-based policies may not be fully aligned to national IE policies, which retards the advancement of providing support to learners with LDR in an inclusive manner. This study is therefore important in shedding light on the experiences and views of teachers, teaching learners with LDR to add to the body of scholarly knowledge which will hopefully contribute to better learning experiences for learners with LDR in future.



## **6.4 LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY**

This research study was a qualitative study and therefore the researcher cannot generalise any of the information. To ensure that information is not generalised, the researcher viewed the phenomena in the complex format within the context of what the study aimed to achieve (Pham 2018:3-4). Another possible limitation was that I, as the researcher, could possibly have been biased as an educator. Therefore, it was important for me to ensure that all ethical considerations were in place to minimise bias (Pham 2018:3-4). I ensured objectivity by keeping a journal in which all my thoughts and interpretations were written down to 'monitor' and mitigate the possibility of personal biases influencing my role of the researcher.

One school has been used for this research study which could be seen as a limitation, because the data gathered from the school was based on one school only and not on different schools. Therefore, more schools could have provided a wider scope of data. The aim was not to form generalisations with regard to the findings but to hopefully provide a rich description of the context and participants' experiences.

The responses of the teachers could have been seen as a limitation, because it is their workplace, and they might not have been as open towards the interviewer during the interviews. Therefore, it was important to ensure validity of the data by using different data collection methods such as document analyses and interviews with participants to get information on the research topic (Pham 2018:3-4).

Another limitation was that the case study research was a timeous process because there were many different methods to collect data, therefore it was important to ensure that there were deadlines in place to ensure that the case study does not take too long (Yin 2009:15).

## **6.5 RECOMMENDATIONS TO SUPPORT LEARNERS WITH LDR AT THE SCHOOL WHERE THE STUDY WAS CONDUCTED**

It is recommended that the school revisits the process involved with identifying learners with barriers to learning including LDR, together with the Learner Support Policy and the Accommodations (Concessions) policy. These documents were seen as a barrier to identifying and supporting learners with LDR. The implementation of the curriculum is also an aspect for further research because the curriculum needs to be adapted to cater for all diverse needs of learner.

The school must ensure that teachers receive in-service training that would equip them with the specialised knowledge and skills to teach learners with LDR. The concept of Inclusive Education must be thoroughly examined, so that the school provides the necessary resources and support to teachers to enhance learning experiences, especially of learners with barriers to learning such as LDR.

Learners with LDR need support throughout their lifetime, with regard to their word recognition, decoding skills and spelling abilities. Learners with LDR need to receive accommodations in all assessments and examinations to ensure that they receive fair and accurate results. Learners with LDR must in no way be discriminated against because of their disability in reading. Learners with LDR can cope in mainstream schools, only if the teachers are willing to provide these learners with the necessary support and ensure that Inclusive Education is evident within the mainstream environment. The success of learners with LDR depends on the attitudes of teachers and the effectiveness of the policies that the schools have in place. With the necessary support, learners with LDR would be able to attend mainstream schools.

## **6.6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY**

Relating to this study and to expand it, further research can be done in focusing on different teaching strategies that can support learners with LDR. Further research can also be done to discover if specific in-service training for teachers has an impact on

the way they teach learners with LDR and if LDR learners' behaviour and attitudes in class improve due to their exposure to improved teaching approaches in the classroom. The experiences of teaching learners with LDR at other schools in different demographic contexts may also contribute to understanding LDR in a more sophisticated manner.

## **6.7 CONCLUSION**

This study highlighted the importance of understanding what a learning disability in reading is and effectively teaching learners with LDR. The study highlighted the importance of Inclusive Education and ensuring that learners with LDR can be included in the mainstream classroom, but that the teachers must be educated, and the curriculum should be adapted to provide adequate support to learners with LDR, so that they can overcome their challenges. The study also highlighted the gap between policy and practice and the need for a revision of some school-based policies to unlock more efficient support for learners with LDR.

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## ADDENDUM A: ETHICAL APPROVAL LETTER

### UNISA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date: 2019/11/13

Dear Mrs CL Aspeling

**Decision: Approve**

Ref:

**2019/11/13/48188700/41/AM**

Name: Mrs CL Aspeling

Student No.: 48188700

**Researcher(s):** Name: Mrs CL Aspeling  
[REDACTED]

**Supervisor(s):** Name: Dr T Moodley  
[REDACTED]

#### Title of research:

**Intermediate phase teachers' views and experiences in teaching learners with reading disabilities at one mainstream private school in Gauteng**

**Qualification:** MEd Inclusive Education

#### Research Ethics Committee Recommendations:

None

Yours sincerely,

Name of the Chair: Prof AT Motlhabane  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

**ADDENDUM B: Request for permission to conduct research at xxxxxx school**

The Executive Head  
Xxxxxxxx Private School  
Address

Dear Sir/Madam, I Charlaine Aspeling am doing research under supervision of Prof Trevor Moodley, in the Department of Psychology towards a MEd at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled 'Intermediate phase teachers' views and experiences in teaching learners with reading disabilities at one mainstream private school in Gauteng.'

The aim of the study is to investigate the attitudes and experiences of mainstream teachers in providing learning support to learners with learning disabilities in reading at a mainstream school.

Your school has been selected because it is a private mainstream school that accepts a variety of learners into the school. Your school potentially gives me access to the teachers who will be able to give me insight to their views and feelings towards learners with learning difficulties in reading.

The potential benefit of this study is that its findings would shed light in a holistic manner on the phenomenon under focus, namely: the teachers perspective on teaching learners with a learning disability in reading. This will shed some light on what support teachers need so that they can accommodate learners with learning disabilities in reading within the classroom.

The study does not foresee any risks towards the participants. No harm is intended to any of the participants. However, a registered counsellor with Health Professions Council of South Africa, will be available should any of the participants require



counselling due to their participation in the data collection process of the proposed study.

There will be no reimbursement or any incentives for participation in the research.

Please note that the name of the institution as well as all participants will not be made known under any circumstances. This includes the members of the senior management team of the school where the study is to be conducted.

All participants will be fully informed of their rights related to participation in this study including: informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, and voluntary withdrawal. Please note that the study has been approved by the UNISA Research Committee. Feedback procedure will entail that the researcher will communicate the findings of each individual participant if they require feedback. The findings will be made available at the library of UNISA.

Yours sincerely

Mrs. Charlaine Lourensia Aspeling

Researcher

**Contact details:**

[REDACTED]



## **ADDENDUM C: Information letter – For Intermediate Phase Teachers**

### **DEAR PROSPECTIVE PARTICIPANT**

My name is Charlaine Aspeling, and I am doing research under the supervision of Prof Trevor Moodley in the Department of Psychology towards a MEd at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled 'Intermediate phase teachers' views and experiences in teaching learners with reading disabilities at one mainstream private school in Gauteng.'

### **WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?**

This study is expected to collect important information that could discover how teachers feel about teaching learners who manifests a learning disability in reading and how these teachers accommodate these learners in the classroom to assist these learners with their learning barriers.

### **WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO PARTICIPATE?**

You are invited because you are a candidate for the proposed study on what teacher perspectives are on teaching learners who with a learning disability in learning at one mainstream school in Gauteng. I obtained your contact details from the school. There will be 9 participants in total: 8 subject teachers and 1 Phase Head.

### **WHAT IS THE NATURE OF MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?**

As a participant you will be asked to answer questions in a semi-structured interview. The interview will be recorded and transcribed. The interview will be no longer than two hours and will consist of semi-structured questions that will be held in a focus group interview. The reason for the interview is to find out what teacher views and experiences on teaching learners with a learning disability in learning are.



### **CAN I WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY EVEN AFTER HAVING AGREED TO PARTICIPATE?**

Participating in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

### **WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?**

The potential benefit of this study is that its findings would shed light in a holistic manner on the phenomenon under focus, namely: to investigate the attitudes and experiences of mainstream teachers in providing learning support to learners with learning disabilities in reading at a mainstream school.

### **ARE THERE ANY NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES FOR ME IF I PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT?**

There will be no negative consequences for you as the participant. All information provided will be treated anonymously and your interview will remain confidential. To ensure that you do not get identified your real name and surname will not be used in the study. Participants will be given pseudonyms in the study.

### **WILL THE INFORMATION THAT I CONVEY TO THE RESEARCHER AND MY IDENTITY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?**

You have the right to insist that your name will not be recorded anywhere and that no one, apart from the researcher and identified members of the research team, will know about your involvement in this research.

Your answers may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly, including the transcriber, external coder, and members of the Research Ethics Review Committee. Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to people working on the study, unless you give permission for other people to see the records.



A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but neither individual participants nor the school will be identifiable in such a report. Your anonymous data may be used for other purposes, such as a research report, journal articles and/or conference proceedings.

### **HOW WILL THE RESEARCHER(S) PROTECT THE SECURITY OF DATA?**

Hard copies of your answers will be stored by the researcher for a period of five years in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet in [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] for future research or academic purposes; electronic information will be stored on a password protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable. After a period of five years information will be destroyed and if necessary, all hard copies will be shredded, and the shredded paper will then be recycled. All soft copy information will be deleted from my laptop as well as from the hard drive of the laptop.

### **WILL I RECEIVE PAYMENT OR ANY INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?**

No payment or incentives will be given to the participants of this study.

### **HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICS APPROVAL**

This study has received written approval from the Research Ethics Review Committee of the CEDU, Unisa. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher if you so wish.

### **HOW WILL I BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS/RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH?**

If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact Charlaine Lourensia Aspeling on email [REDACTED] The findings are accessible for a period of 1 year.



Should you require any further information or want to contact the researcher about any aspect of this study, please contact Charlaine Lourensia Aspeling on email:

[REDACTED]

Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact Prof. Trevor Moodley on email [REDACTED]

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.

Thank you.

Mrs. Charlaine Lourensia Aspeling

Researcher

**Contact details:**

[REDACTED]





## **ADDENDUM D: Participants consent form**

### **CONSENT/ASSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY (Return slip)**

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (participant name), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits, and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet.

I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable).

I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings, but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified.

I agree to the recording of the interview.

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant Name & Surname (please print)

---

Participant Signature

Date

Researcher's Name & Surname (please print)

---

Researcher's signature

Date



## ADDENDUM E: Interview Questions: Phase Head interview

<b>Length of interview</b>	2 hours was scheduled for the interview
<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Time</b>	14:30 – 16:30
<b>Place</b>	<i>School: Classroom number 25</i>
<b>Interviewer</b>	<i>Name of the researcher: Mrs CL Aspeling</i>
<b>Interviewee</b>	<i>Code I</i>
<b>Interviewer</b>	<p>Good afternoon. Thank you for being willing to take part in my research study. I did receive ethical clearance from UNISA for my research study. The title of my thesis is: Intermediate phase teachers' views and experiences in teaching learners with learning disabilities in reading at one mainstream school in Gauteng.</p> <p>Please take note that the interview will be recorded and transcribed. The interview and the findings will be published in the thesis that will be submitted to UNISA. Please note that your identity as well as the schools' identity will remain confidential. Please sign the consent form. A copy of the form will be given to you.</p> <p>The reason for this interview is to find out how the phase head oversees learners with learning disabilities in reading and what learner support interventions the phase head provides to the teachers.</p>
<b>Question 1</b>	Learning disabilities according to my study is defined by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th edition (DSM-V) as a specific learning disability in a specific academic ability.

	The DSM-V states that a pattern of learning difficulties is pronunciation of words, reading fluently, poor word recognition, difficulty in spelling and breaking up words in sounds and identifying rhyme as characteristics of learning disabilities in reading. The DSM-5 uses a specific criterion to identify a learning disability in reading which includes: reading accuracy, reading rate and fluency, and reading comprehension. Please explain to me what your understanding of a learning disability in reading is?
<b>Question 2</b>	Tell me about the approach the school takes to identify learners with learning disabilities in reading.
<b>Question 3</b>	Please explain to me how you ensure that learners with learning disabilities in reading receive learning support.
<b>Question 4</b>	Explain how teachers are supported (supportive) when teaching and assessing learners with reading disabilities.
<b>Question 5</b>	So, if they are doing their formal assessments, how would the teacher support the learner that does not understand the content who has a learning disability in reading.
<b>Question 6</b>	What other assessments can be done to identify learners with learning disabilities in your school?
<b>Question 7</b>	Please explain the process involved in supporting learners with a reading disability in reading.
<b>Question 8</b>	How would the teacher support the learner when the teach them within the classroom?
<b>Question 9</b>	You've mentioned group work as a method to support learners with learning disabilities in reading. Can you please elaborate on what other support teachers give to learners with learning disabilities in reading during assessments?
<b>Question 10</b>	What are your views about the inclusion of learners with learning disabilities in reading in mainstream schools?
<b>Question 11</b>	Tell me about your experiences of learners with learning disabilities in reading in the classroom.
<b>Question 12</b>	You mentioned your experiences of learners with reading disabilities. Please discuss how you would change the classroom environment to give more support to the teachers

	and the learners, so that the teachers who teaches learners with reading disabilities can support them more.
<b>Question 13</b>	In your opinion, who must take responsibility for learners with reading disabilities?
<b>Question 14</b>	What support does the school provide to the teachers to ensure that the teachers are equipped enough to teach learners who manifests a learning disability in reading.
<b>Question 15</b>	What support do teachers receive with regards to curriculum delivery?
<b>Question 16</b>	What steps must the teacher and the school take to give the learner learning support?
<b>Question 17</b>	What school policies do you provide to the teachers and the learners to assist learners with learning disabilities in reading?
<b>Question 18</b>	The teachers at this school, do they feel equipped enough to be able to teach these learners or do they need additional help from the school?
<b>Question 19</b>	Do you think that the school supports the teachers enough when they do teach learners that have a learning disability in reading?
<b>Question 20</b>	Please discuss the policies that the school has in place to give the teachers and the learners support with regards to learners who has a learning disability in reading
<b>Question 21</b>	When there is a child with a reading disability in reading, can the teacher ask the parent to take the learner for an external evaluation, before going to the school support team?
<b>Question 22</b>	In a case where a learner has an extreme reading disability in reading, are they accommodated in the classroom with regards to the curriculum or will the curriculum be adapted so that they can understand the content and to answer the assessments in an easier manner that the rest of the class?
Thank you very much for your time and thank you for answering all my questions. If you have any other questions or concerns, you are more than welcome to contact me.	

## ADDENDUM F: Interview Questions: Focus group – Gr 4 Teachers

<b>Length of interview</b>	2 hours were scheduled for the interview
<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Time</b>	14:30 – 16:30
<b>Date</b>	Monday, 3 February 2020
<b>Place</b>	School: Classroom number 25
<b>Interviewer</b>	Name of the researcher: Mrs CL Aspeling
<b>Interviewees</b>	<p>Name of the teachers were changed.</p> <p>Code D – Natural Science</p> <p>Code A - English</p> <p>Code B - Mathematics</p> <p>Code C - English</p>
<b>Interviewer</b>	<p>Good afternoon. Thank you for being willing to take part in my research study. I did receive ethical clearance from UNISA for my research study. The title of my research is: “Intermediate phase teachers’ views and experiences in teaching learners with reading disabilities at one mainstream school in Gauteng.”</p> <p>Please take note that the interview will be recorded and transcribed. The interview and the findings will be published in the thesis that will be submitted to UNISA. Please note that your identity as well as the schools’ identity will remain confidential. Please sign the consent form. A copy of the form will be given to you.</p> <p>The reason for this interview is to find out how the teachers accommodate the learners with learning disabilities in reading within the classroom. As well as how teachers feel about teaching learners who manifest learning disabilities in reading. Does everyone understand?</p>

	<p><i>(ALL THE TEACHERS NODDED “YES”)</i></p> <p>Learning disabilities according to my study is defined by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th edition (DSM-V) as a specific learning disability in a specific academic ability. The DSM-V states that a pattern of learning difficulties is pronunciation of words, reading fluently, poor word recognition, difficulty in spelling and breaking up words in sounds and identifying rhyme as characteristics of learning disabilities in reading. The DSM-5 uses a specific criterion to identify a learning disability in reading which includes: reading accuracy, reading rate and fluency, and reading comprehension.</p>
<b>Question 1</b>	Please describe what you understand by learning disabilities in reading. Please be detailed.
<b>Question 2</b>	Tell me how you experience learners who manifests reading disabilities within the classroom environment?
<b>Question 3</b>	How do you guys feel about teaching learners with learning disabilities?
<b>Question 4</b>	How effective is it for a mainstream school to accommodate learners with learning disabilities in reading?
<b>Question 5</b>	How would you then identify learner within the classroom who manifests a learning disability in reading?
<b>Question 6</b>	Please explain the process involved in supporting learners with a reading disability in reading.
<b>Question 7</b>	Will you say that the reading disability influences the learner’s scholastic performance a lot?
<b>Question 8</b>	You all mentioned you’re experiences of learners with reading disabilities. Explain what strategies you employ in the classroom to accommodate these learners with reading disabilities.

<b>Question 9</b>	What assessment accommodations are made for learners with learning disabilities in reading?
<b>Question 10</b>	Will the strategies be different for informal and formal assessments?
<b>Question 11</b>	In your opinion, do you feel that these learners cope in the mainstream schools? Please elaborate.
<b>Question 12</b>	Do you think that the curriculum gives you enough time to assist learners who manifests learning disabilities in reading?
<b>Question 13</b>	If you see a child who struggles to understand the assessment, would you make the assessment easier for the learner, for example if they have to read an assessment and you noticed that they cannot read, will you give them an easier reading passage to read in order to accommodate them?
<b>Question 14</b>	Would you change anything about the curriculum that will help you as a teacher to assist these learners in the classroom more?
<b>Question 15</b>	Do you feel equipped enough as a teacher to assist learners with disabilities in reading?
<b>Question 16</b>	Do you feel that there must maybe be a classroom just for children with learning disabilities in reading, so that they can be a remedial teacher with those children all the time even though the children are still in a mainstream school, but just a little bit excluded?
<b>Question 17</b>	Do you try to put inclusive education in your classroom lessons to make sure that you include every single child with a learning disability?
<b>Question 18</b>	What do you understand from the term inclusive education?
<b>Question 19</b>	According to my research study inclusion education is described by 'The Education White Paper 6' as a system where the emphasis is on the fact that every child can learn and that every child must be supported according to his/ her needs. Inclusive education focuses on the education system that needs to be a support structure to all learners with learning needs. The

	<p>inclusive education system strives to change the attitudes of teachers and learners, as well as adapting the curriculum and environment in order to attend to all divers needs of learners.</p> <p>Does your school provide inclusive education to an extent where the children who do struggle with learning disabilities can actually feel safe in their environment and cope with the lessons?</p>
<b>Question 20</b>	Do you think you receive enough support from the school to help you to teach learners with reading disabilities?
<b>Question 21</b>	Please elaborate on your answer.
<b>Question 22</b>	In what ways can you support yourself in teaching learners with learning disabilities in reading? As we stand in front of the classroom every day and we sit with the children who cannot read. So, what can you do for yourself to make sure that that child can read?
<b>Question 23</b>	Do you get any support from the parents with learners who have learning disabilities in reading?
<b>Question 24</b>	Will you please give me an example of support that you can receive to make sure that you can teach these learners to the best of your ability.
<b>Question 25</b>	Do you feel that teaching these learners and helping them in the classroom is your responsibility? Please elaborate.
Thank you very much for all your answers. Does anyone else want to add something?	



## ADDENDUM G: Interview Questions: Focus group – Gr 6 Teachers

<b>Length of interview</b>	2 hours was scheduled for the interview
<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Time</b>	14:30 – 15:30
<b>Date</b>	Tuesday, 4 February 2020
<b>Place</b>	School: Classroom number 25
<b>Interviewer</b>	Name of the researcher: Mrs CL Aspeling
<b>Interviewee</b>	<p>Name of the teachers were changed.</p> <p>Code H – Natural Science</p> <p>Code E – Eng</p> <p>Code F – Math</p> <p>Code G – Social Science</p>
<b>Interviewer</b>	<p>Good afternoon. Thank you for being willing to take part in my research study. I did receive ethical clearance from UNISA for my research study. The title of my research is: Intermediate phase teachers' views and experiences in teaching learners with reading disabilities at one mainstream school in Gauteng.</p> <p>Please take note that the interview will be recorded and transcribed. The interview and the findings will be published in the thesis that will be submitted to UNISA. Please note that your identity as well as the schools' identity will remain confidential. Please sign the consent form. A copy of the form will be given to you.</p> <p>The reason for this interview is to find out how the teachers accommodate the learners with learning disabilities in reading within the classroom. As well as how teachers feel about teaching learners who manifest learning disabilities in reading.</p>

	Learning disabilities according to my study is defined by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th edition (DSM-V) as a specific learning disability in a specific academic ability. The DSM-V states that a pattern of learning difficulties is pronunciation of words, reading fluently, poor word recognition, difficulty in spelling and breaking up words in sounds and identifying rhyme as characteristics of learning disabilities in reading. The DSM-5 uses a specific criterion to identify a learning disability in reading which includes: reading accuracy, reading rate and fluency, and reading comprehension.
<b>Question 1</b>	Please describe what you understand by learning disabilities in reading. Please be detailed in your response.
<b>Question 2</b>	Tell me how you experience learners who manifests reading disabilities within the classroom environment?
<b>Question 3</b>	How would you approach these learners in the classroom then to make sure that they do participate in the activity?
<b>Question 4</b>	How would you identify a learner with a learning disability in reading?
<b>Question 5</b>	How do you guys feel about teaching learners with learning disabilities?
<b>Question 6</b>	So, based on this do you feel equipped enough to teach these learners?
<b>Question 7</b>	Please elaborate on your answer.
<b>Question 8</b>	What support from the school would you prefer in order to help you as a teacher to educate these learners?
<b>Question 9</b>	Do you think that our learners in our private school will benefit from having a classroom separate to the other classes where they can get the remedial teaching that they need?
<b>Question 10</b>	Please elaborate on your answer.
<b>Question 11</b>	Would you accommodate these learners in your classroom by adapting the curriculum so that they are able to cope with the workload?

<b>Question 12</b>	How effective is it for a mainstream school to accommodate learners with learning disabilities in reading?
<b>Question 13</b>	How would you then accommodate learners with their informal assessments or their formal assessments within the classroom before they write written cycle tests every week to help them with their learning barrier in reading?
<b>Question 14</b>	Explain what strategies you will employ in the classroom to accommodate learners with learning disabilities.
<b>Question 15</b>	Explain what strategies you would employ in the classroom to accommodate learners with learning disabilities. So, what would you do in the classroom to help them throughout the lesson?
<b>Question 16</b>	What assessment accommodations are made for learners with learning disabilities in reading?
<b>Question 17</b>	Please inform me of any assistance the learners with reading disabilities will receive during a formal assessment. So, what actually is done at the school or is in place for them?
<b>Question 18</b>	In your opinion, do you feel that these learners cope in the mainstream schools? Please elaborate.
<b>Question 19</b>	What do you understand from the term inclusive education?
<b>Question 20</b>	Would you think that it will benefit these learners more to rather attend special needs schools than to be in a mainstream school?
<b>Question 21</b>	Suggest ways in which the classroom environment can be changed to improve the learning experiences of learners with reading disabilities.
<b>Question 22</b>	Do you think that the curriculum gives you enough time to assist learners who manifests learning disabilities in reading?
<b>Question 23</b>	You all earlier said that you do not feel equipped enough as a teacher to assist these learners. Do you think specific training in teaching learners with learning disabilities in reading could assist you with helping the learner with the learning disability?




<b>Question 24</b>	Do you think you will maybe need more support from the school and the parents maybe so that you can assist these learners within the classroom?
<b>Question 25</b>	Do you think that the teachers can support each other more in teaching these learners?
<b>Question 26</b>	Do you feel that inclusive education manifests in this school?
<b>Question 27</b>	When there is a learner in the classroom with a severe reading disability in reading, what strategies does teachers implement to ensure that these learners get the support they need?
<b>Question 28</b>	Whose responsibility do you think it is to help these learners?
<b>Question 29</b>	Please explain to me the process involved with regards to the Learner Support Policy and how you feel about the steps that the Learner Support Team take to implement the policy.
<b>Question 30</b>	Does anyone else want to add something to learning disabilities in reading, about how you feel about teaching them or how you feel with them in your classroom?
Thank you very much for being, giving me your time and answering all my questions. I really do appreciate it.	

# ADDENDUM H: Document analysis example

Type of document	
Date the document was completed	
Person who completed the document	
For whom was the document compiled?	
Date the document was reviewed	
What the document is about.	
What evidence does this document have that supports the case study?	
Summarise the information in the document:	

## ADDENDUM I: Excerpt of English Home Language Gr 6 Term Plan

TERM PLANNING 2020 ENGLISH HOME LANGUAGE GRADE 6				
GRADE	6			
TERM	1	2	3	4
NUMBER OF WEEKS	8			
CURRICULUM MATERIAL	Solutions for All Grade 6 (Learner's book, Teacher's guide and core reader) Oxford Reading Tree Additional worksheets SharePoint			

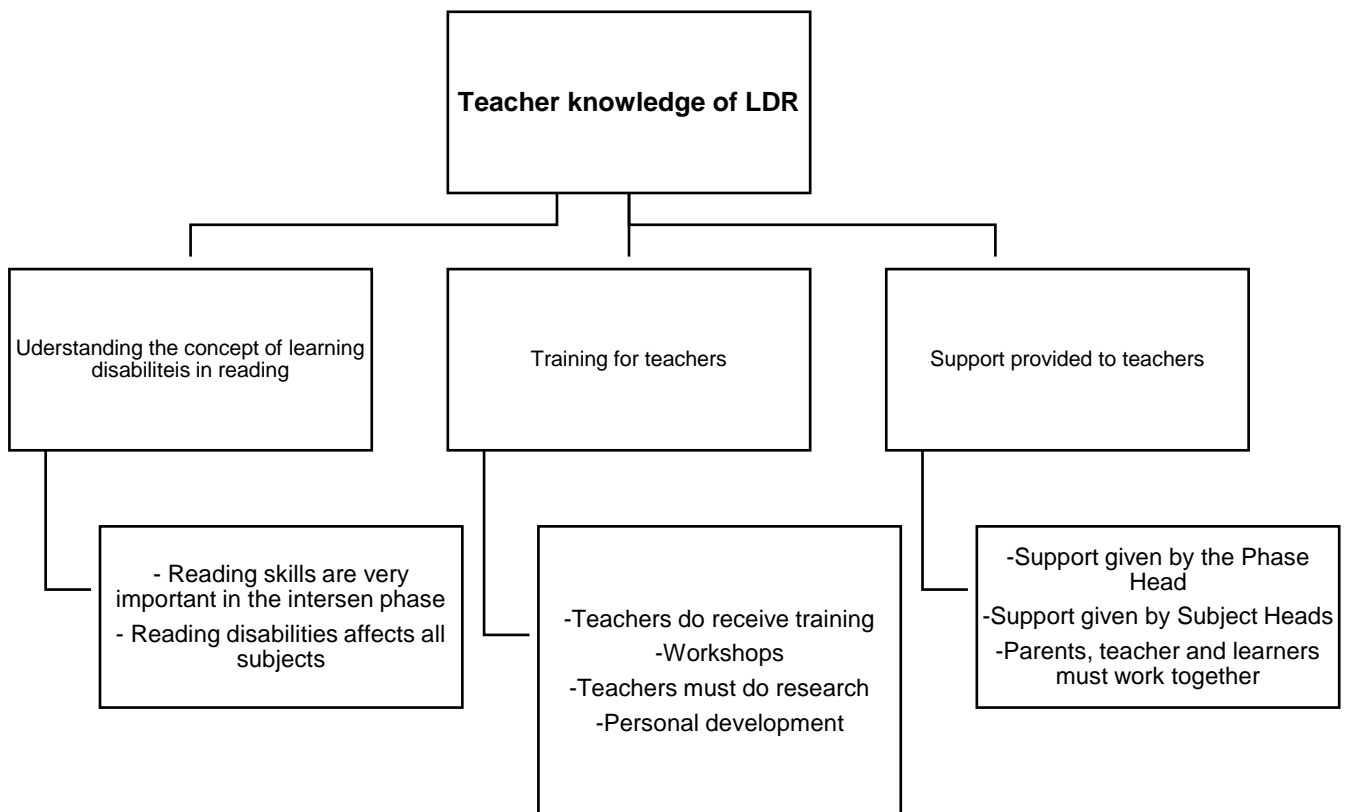
WEEK 1 – 2 31 March – 9 April	LANGUAGE SKILLS	THEME: Unit 6 Do it yourself!	Learner's book page 65 – 78 Teacher's Guide page 71 - 85	ASSESSMENT
	  <b>LISTENING AND SPEAKING</b>	CONTENT		
<p><u>Introduce theme:</u> Watch video: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S41aW2UdUyw">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S41aW2UdUyw</a> <u>Listens to and discusses an instructional text</u></p> <p>Introductory activities: prediction Recalls procedure Identifies the features of instructional text Notes key headings Gives clear instructions, e.g. on how to make a cup of tea Makes notes and applies instructions read Asks questions to clarify</p> <p>Listen to the clip and answer questions.</p>  English HLGr. 6 Assessment Term 2 T			<p>Assessment T2T1.1</p>  Microsoft Word Document	

<b>READING AND VIEWING</b> <b>Teaching strategies</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shared Reading (Comprehension Skills)</li> <li>Guided Reading (Reciprocal Teaching of Reading)</li> <li>Independent Reading</li> </ul> Comprehension Activities (Application of Comprehension Skills)  <b>Reading Process:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pre – Reading (Before)</li> <li>Reading (During)</li> <li>Post Reading (After)</li> </ul>	<b>READING: 2020 Focus</b> <b>Independent Reading</b> <u>Reads a recipe or other instructional text</u> <u>Compares two different recipes or instructions</u> 1. <u>How to resolve conflict (pg. 68-69)</u> 2. <u>How to sprout lentils (pg. 70)</u> Analyses the characteristics of the text: organisation and conventions of instructional texts Orders jumbled instructions Uses appropriate reading and comprehension strategies: scanning Shows understanding of the text and how it functions: literal reading Recognises and explains the different structures, language use and purposes Identifies and evaluates register of a text Understands and uses information texts appropriately	
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## ADDENDUM J: Excerpt of transcript

Interviewer	Q2: Tell me how you experience learners who manifests reading disabilities within the classroom environment?
Code G:	Uh, Misbehaved, because they don't want to spend their time reading something that they know they not going to understand. They don't even want to try. They are literally just gonna sit there, they are like "ok well, they are reading, I'm going to misunderstand it in any way", so they are going to chat to their friend, maybe find their understanding to the text that they just read or maybe ask someone "Can you just tell me what this word means?". So now they are disrupting the class, because they don't know what the word means. So, I must say I have learners disrupt my class like that.
Code E:	Ja, for me it's frustration that manifests in something else. Because they're frustrated, but they don't know how to deal with the frustration, therefore they can act out perhaps sometimes.
Code H:	These learners tend to be less confident when it comes to general interaction in the classroom. They tend to be more disruptive and attention seeking. Their work is generally untidy, and they have a very casual approach. They tend to be satisfied with a diminished effort instead of an increased effort in the classroom and the subject's academic demands generally.
Code G:	Either they become extremely loud...
Code F:	Sometimes they are just very quiet. They don't want to answer anything, they don't want to ask anything. Just very quiet.
Code E:	They don't want to participate
Code G:	They don't want to be seen.

## ADDENDUM K: Excerpt of Identification of themes: Understanding LDR





## **ADDENDUM L: Certificate of academic editing**

### **Editing Certificate**

Mariëtte Postma

0157

mariette@postma.co.za/mariette.postma@gmail.com

31 March 2021

I, Dr Mariette Postma, ID number [REDACTED] hereby declare that the study named below was language edited by myself as an accredited editor of SATI:

Language editing certificate of the Master's study  
by Charlaine L. Aspeling,

**Teachers' views and experiences in teaching learners with learning disabilities  
in reading at one mainstream school in Gauteng**

in Inclusive Education.

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## ADDENDUM M: Certificate of reference checking declaration

### EDITING DECLARATION

#### **Susanna Elizabeth Louw**

Non-accredited member of the South African Translators' Institute  
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Email: anzelle@wordfix.co.za

DATE: 2021-07-02

I, SE Louw, hereby declare that I checked the references for the dissertation titled **TEACHERS' VIEWS AND EXPERIENCES IN TEACHING LEARNERS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES IN READING AT ONE MAINSTREAM SCHOOL IN GAUTENG** by CL Aspelung. The work included the following:

- Checking the list of sources against the text to ensure that all sources cited in the text were included in the list of sources.
- Deleting sources from the list of sources that were not cited in the text.
- Checking that each source is complete – please note that I did not verify the correctness of each source, only the completeness.
- Formatting the citations and the list of sources consistently and according to guidelines provided by the student. There were two exceptions to this:
  - Citations for the Department of Education and Department of Basic Education were left as they were, using the department names rather than "South Africa" as suggested by the referencing guidelines.
  - Hyphens were used for page ranges rather than en-dashes, as it seemed likely that further changes would be made to the document and that hyphens would be used while making those changes.
- Checking that the page numbers cited in the text matched the page ranges in the list of sources and flagging page ranges that did not match for review.

If further information is required, please contact me.

*SE Louw*  
Susanna Elizabeth Louw

2021-07-02  
Date

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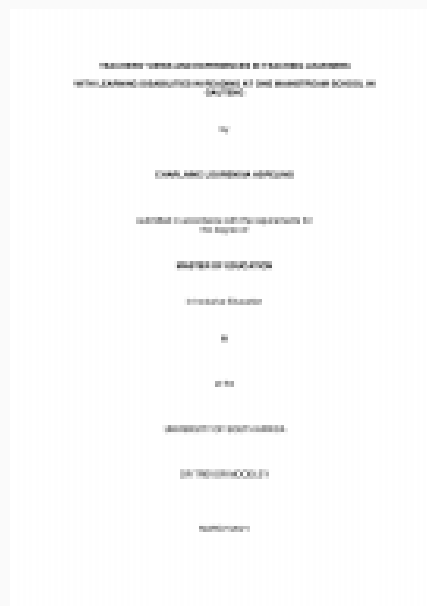


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